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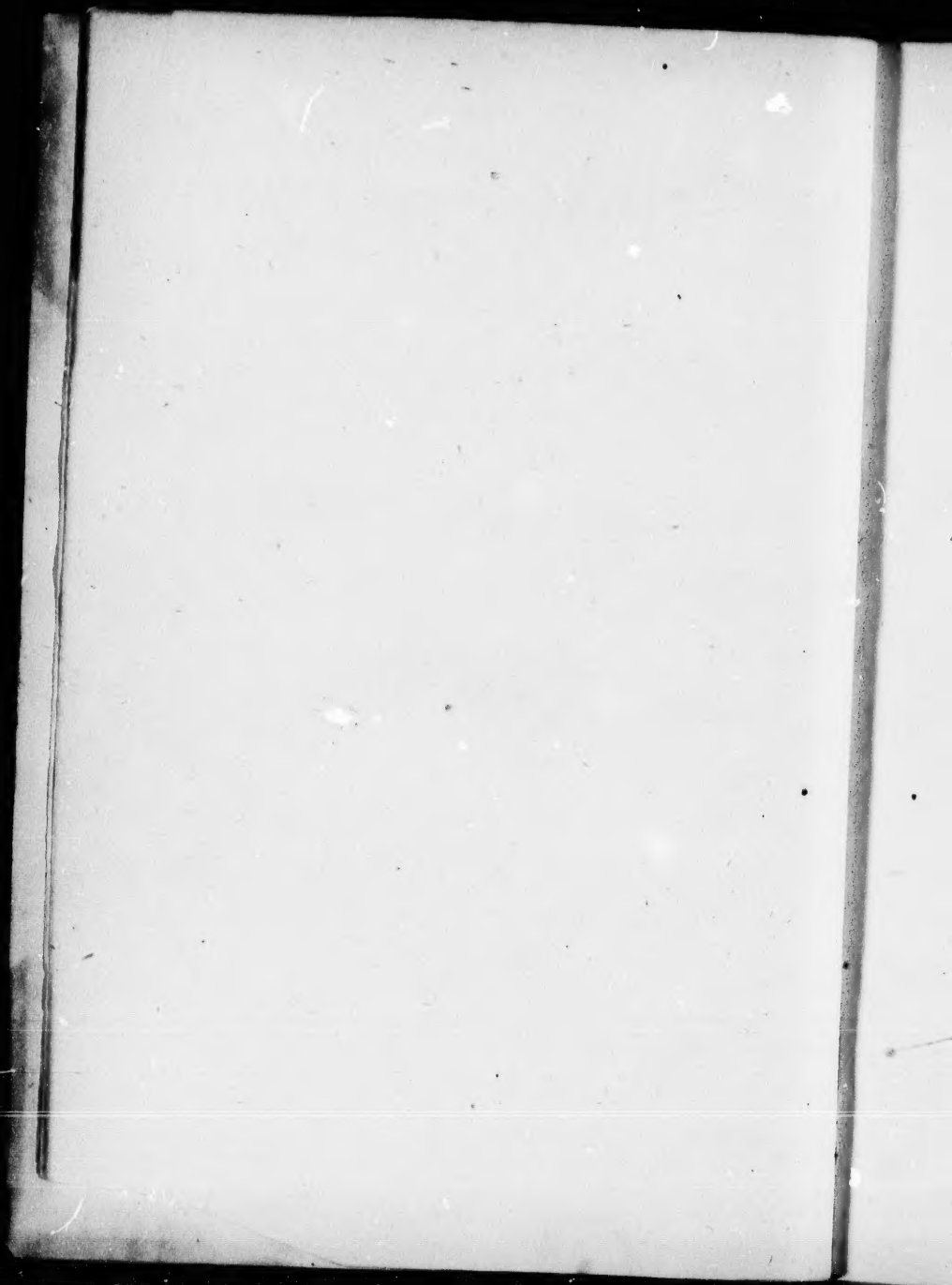
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IN HONOUR BOUND.

BY

CHARLES GIBBON,

AUTHOR OF "ROBIN GRAY," "FOR LACK OF GOLD," "FOR THE KING,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

"A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles."

—WORDSWORTH.



Toronto:

HUNTER, ROSE AND COMPANY

1874.

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TO

Lady Cox,

OF KINELLAN,

THE DAUGHTER OF BURNS'S "BONNIE LESLIE,"

I dedicate this book in token of admiration and respect for one whose days are devoted to the good work of making others happy: and in token of affectionate gratitude for a never-failing sympathy which has, many times, dispelled morbid moods, and blessed me with the inspiration of Courage and Hope. The influence which that sympathy has exercised over my life is my happiest experience, and I wish to utter here my heartfelt thankfulness for the good fortune which gave me such a Friend.

LONDON, 26th September, 1874.

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CHAPTER I.

MONEY.


HERE was much commotion in the district of Kingshaven when the report circulated that George Methven was dead. It was not so much his death which caused the commotion as the rumours of the enormous wealth he had left behind. Some said he had left half a million; others that a million was more like the thing; others again that the sum amounted to nearly two millions in bonds, shares, and stock of various kinds. It was therefore natural that profound interest should be taken in the man's death: the wonder is that the good folk did not insist upon a public funeral—for was not the late George Methven a millionaire?

The people of Kingshaven, who regarded ten thousand as a handsome fortune, and who considered themselves exceedingly prosperous when their income passed five hundred a year—a degree of prosperity demanding extra diligence in well-doing (that is, increasing the store), and punctual kirk-attendance—stared at each other in blank amazement as they listened to the reports of the fabulous wealth acquired by Geordie Methven. The deceased was still mentioned by the inhabitants of his native place as plain “Geordie,” sometimes “poor Geordie” Methven.

“I doubt it's not all well come by,” observed the provost—a man of position and means. He owned property in the town; and lately—to please his wife, who wished to spite her neighbours—he had braved the jeers of his brethren, and started a brougham (second-hand). But he was a bold man, and having made the innovation, he was resolved to extract from it the greatest amount of credit which could be extracted. So, towards the close of any social gathering, you would hear the

provost demanding in a loud voice if his "carriage and lamps" had come. Never before had any magistrate of Kingshaven presumed to any grander vehicle than a dog-cart.

"Geordie was a queer lad," said Todd the miller; "but we're a' deadly and lively, and it must come some day." He was very solemn, but somewhat vague; probably he was the more impressive in consequence.

"He was never married," was the comment of Brunton the farmer, who thought he had solved the problem of Methven's riches. He had been himself twice married.

"Well, well, well!" continued the provost with an air of retrospective patronage, "if I had only known what he was to come to, I might have helped the laddie."

"He seems to have got on pretty well without your help," was the disagreeable rejoinder of the bailie, who was also the oldest doctor of the town.

The provost walked home, thoughtful.

"Who is to be the heir?" inquired his wife, Mrs. Dubbieside; "will it be Dalmahoy?"

"More like to be Miss Wishart, if it's either of them. But there's no saying how it will go, for I hear there's no will, and the property will fall to the nearest friends. I wonder if any of our forebears were connected."

The eyes of Mrs. Dubbieside started on her fat cheeks at the mere possibility of a relationship about which, not long ago, she would have been discreetly silent if it had existed. She was a short, stout Lancashire woman, and she was described by the bailie's wife as "a poor creature who was always ailing and always cooking."

The provost and his wife laid their heads together, and devoted the day to a diligent study of genealogy, ranging as far as fourth and fifth cousins seven times removed. There were other people occupied at that moment in similar exciting speculations.

George Methven was a natural child; his mother, a poor lass, who died soon after his birth; his father, a wild young laird, who never remembered the existence of the boy, and who happened to be married to a wealthy widow on the very day George was born.

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The child was left to the care of his maternal grandmother : an honest, hard-working woman, who had too much respect for the "gentry," and too much awe, to make any fuss about the misfortune of her daughter. She belonged to that class of dames who were ready to say, as one had said to a son who had offended his chief, "Come awa and be hanged, Dugald, to please the laird."

Mrs. Methven's system of nursing was singularly simple. She filled a common bottle with milk, warm water, and a little coarse sugar ; then she tied a piece of soft rag, in several folds, over the mouth of the bottle, which she placed beside the baby on the floor. Then she went forth to her work in the fields. Perhaps a neighbour wife would step in during the day to see how the bairn was getting on ; otherwise he was left to hug his bottle-mother until granny returned home in the evening.

And the child lived ! Not only lived, but became so venturesome that soon granny found it necessary to tie him to the leg of the table during her absence. At eighteen months he was firm on his feet ; at two years he had to be sent to an infant-school to keep him out of mischief.

The school was a small room in a sort of hut, kept by a half-witted creature called Singgy Brod—"Singgy," a nickname suggested by the man's sing-song intonation of speech. Nobody knew whence Singgy had come ; but he had been so long settled in the district that the people accepted him as a permanent institution. Droll, too, that nobody remembered Singgy as anything but what he was when George Methven became his pupil—a little wiry old man, with lank iron-grey hair, and dressed in a long frock-coat, brown with age and diversified with patches. His hut contained a single room ; and he took charge of all the children who had to be left unprotected by their natural guardians during working-hours. Singgy's was, in a manner, a feeder to the parish school—at which he was never wearied scoffing. He did manage to instil into his pupils a dim idea that the alphabet by certain magical combinations formed words, and a few of the children acquired the art of making bad pot-hooks. But in winter Singgy was chiefly occupied trying to keep up a fire with very little peat and no coal—down on his knees, alternately puffing at the feeble flame and scolding the

urchins ; and in summer he generally began his day's work with the announcement—

“ We'll have no school to-day, bairns ; we'll awa to the burn and fush for minnows.”

The infants, delighted to get out to the sunshine, raised a joyful shout, and followed their master. In the course of these excursions he would sometimes obtain a pennyworth of candy from the perambulating rag and bone merchant ; with this confection—made of treacle and flour—he would treat all the good boys and girls, and the bad ones equally ; for although Singgy threatened much, he seldom carried his punishment beyond the threat. He fared well enough himself, for usually he stepped into the nearest farm-house at dinner-hour, and nobody ever thought of denying him a share of whatever might be on the table. Sometimes he would fix upon the house where he intended to dine, and he would call in the morning to intimate his intention, also to direct the good wife to “ be sure and put ingans in the broth.”

All this freedom was rarely resented. Singgy was pitied and laughed at with an under-current of liking ; for he always carried in his hand a torn dirty copy of Horace (which he was never known to read) ; and Latin and the Church being so closely allied in the agricultural mind, the book served as a talisman which secured for the owner food and endurance.

By this man, George Methven was conducted to the threshold of the beautiful world of which reading, writing, and arithmetic are the gates. The boy actually did learn something ; he had a power of instinctive acquisition of the meaning and spirit of the lessons which were set before him ; and at seven he could read the whole of the first horn-book ! There is no telling what he might have been able to do at that age, if he had been brought up by an experienced crammer ; as it was, the little he could do was a marvellous achievement under the circumstances. It was fortunate for him that he had succeeded so well ; for at this period granny died, and he was left homeless, without a friend able or willing to pay on his account the moderate penny a week which was Singgy's charge for tuition. But the schoolmaster did not desert his pupil ; he took care of him for a year—making some profit out of his benevolence, it must be owned ; but then benevolence is so

much more enjoyable when it is profitable—and after that placed him with a small farmer as a herd.

Geordie was only about eight when he began the real work of life. In return for his services in herding sheep and cattle, he had food, and a corner of the stable-loft to sleep in at night, besides any cast-off clothes which the farmer's wife might give him. At ten he earned a few shillings as wages, in addition to food and lodging. On the hill-side during the day, by the kitchen fire at night, he spelled through every scrap of printed matter which fell in his way, and he exercised his penmanship with the aid of a bit of slate which had been blown off a roof, and a piece of pencil which had been given to him by one of the farmer's children. At twelve he could read tolerably, and write plainly, thanks in some measure to the hours which Singgy spent with him during the bright summer days when study and herding were congenial occupations, and thanks still more to his own dogged resolution to learn.

The boy was not much liked; he was too silent—dour, he was often called. He performed whatever task was set before him, but there was no alacrity in his movements, no sign of pleasure in his work; and although he seldom blundered, he was set down as a very stupid, discontented lad, who would come to no good. He was conscious of the little esteem in which he was held; yet he did not try to win favour. On several occasions he had been abused as an "ill-getted loon," and reminded of his illegitimate existence. He hung his head and made no reply, but the reproach sank deep in his nature. The world seemed to him a very hard place to live in, and the future very blank. He was shy and nervous. There was a pinched, eager look in his face, and never a glint of warmth. The face seemed to reflect the warped condition of the poor child's heart.

One cold day when the east wind, which thereabout was known very appropriately as "the razor," was blowing in keenly from the sea, Geordie had to make a journey across the moors to bring sheep down from the hills into the home fields. With his jacket buttoned close up to his neck, his bonnet pulled over his brows, and his head bent against "the razor," he trudged along the bleak road.

A solitary crow sat on a dilapidated fence, uttering at intervals a melancholy "Caw, caw."

Geordie looked at the bird, and whilst the wind was biting through his jacket, and some thoughts of his own miserable position were passing through his mind, he muttered—

"Caw, caw, you idiot! What for did the Lord gi'e you wings, if it wasna to flee awa from a country like this?"

The crow, frightened by his approach, rose on the wing, and the boy watched it till it disappeared over the trees of a distant plantation.

Geordie wished he could fly. Then it occurred to him that although he had no wings he had legs, and they might be used to as good purpose.

At fourteen he took leave of Kingshaven. He had a red cotton handkerchief in his hand, full of oatcakes and cheese, and he had a white shilling in his pocket. The cakes and cheese sufficed to satisfy his appetite during the day, and at night he slept under the most convenient haystack. So he tramped to Glasgow, the shilling safe in his pocket when he entered that smoky city. He had also a letter written by the minister of Kingshaven, certifying that he was an honest lad. With the help of this certificate he obtained a situation as message-boy in the office of a small contractor, at a salary of five shillings a week. On that sum he contrived to exist and to save a few pence.

He was painfully methodical in the performance of every act, whether the act affected himself or his master. In three years he was advanced to a stool in the office; at twenty he was regarded as one of the most valuable of the contractor's assistants; at twenty-five he was head clerk; and at thirty he was in Manchester, beginning business in a very humble way on his own account.

He prospered rapidly, marvellously. It seemed as if all the ills of his youth were to be compensated by the unprecedented success of his manhood. Everything he touched seemed to turn to gold. Amongst Manchester men it became a business to note the speculations in which Methven interested himself, and to leap at them the instant they were assured that he was "in the swim," satisfied that the results must be profitable. His "good luck," the title which people like to give to clear visions

and steadfast work, never failed him. The confidence he inspired was unlimited. There was a serious crisis in his affairs, as there is in the affairs of every man. He went to the bank, told the directors plainly his position, and the risk they would run in trusting him. They were a little frightened, but they trusted him. The bank gained a hundred thousand through the faith of its directors, and Methven was established as a millionaire.

The man was cold, silent, dour, as the boy had been. His life was a sort of golden nightmare. There was in it no love, which is the sun of life. He had no friends, no affections. No woman's shadow crossed his thoughts, to interfere with his entire devotion to business success. He gave large sums to charities, he assisted the deserving, he paid his full income-tax—and there his moral responsibilities appeared to end. If he had regrets, desires, or hopes outside his ledger, they were never apparent in word, act, or look.

One grateful act he had performed. He had brought his old dominie from the hut at Kingshaven, and established him in his Manchester palace. He clothed him anew, made him an allowance for pocket-money, which in the dazed eyes of Singgy Brod was unbounded wealth, and the servants were directed to attend to his wishes as they would to their master's.

At first Singgy was dumb with bewilderment. He was humble, grateful, although he sometimes sighed for the freedom of his hut and rags. He was afraid of the servants, and slunk out of their way as quietly as possible. He was afraid to use the beautiful furniture of the grand mansion. Dinner was a daily torture to him. He never dared to ask for "ingans" in the soup now. He ate in fear and trembling lest the butler should be offended, and was always anxious to save trouble by using one plate throughout the meal. The exclamation he had uttered on his arrival was continually rising in his throat, and half choking him as he gulped it down—

"Man, Geordie, it's no possible that it's you!"

It was so like enchantment—a modern version of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp. Some day it would all disappear just as suddenly as Aladdin's palace, and he would find himself back in the old hut, with the bairns squalling around him. He thought he would prepare, for the evil day, and he began to

hoard his allowance. But as time passed and the dreaded transformation did not take place, his mood changed. He began to think, "It is to me that Geordie owes all this. If it had not been for me, where would he have been? Certainly not here."

This idea developed gradually into a conviction that whatever Methven possessed, he had a right to share it. Presently, instead of being timid in dealing with the domestics, he took to bullying them. He detected waste everywhere; with nervous anxiety to punish the delinquents, he took to listening at keyholes and spying into drawers and cupboards. He roundly abused the whole staff, from scullion to butler, for robbing *him*. The servants grumbled at this tyranny; but Methven would not interfere. In consequence there were frequent changes in the household, and soon there was not left one of the domestics who had witnessed the dominie's arrival.

Then the old man felt more at ease, but he did not relax his vigilance, and his parsimonious ways became more marked than before. He had been happy as a vagrant schoolmaster, depending almost upon charity for his dinner; he was miserable with wealth at his command. The gold-fever had entered into the poor creature's blood, and had wrought a greater transformation in his nature than in his circumstances. It was the passion of the miser which possessed him. He had no sense of the power of happiness with which the genius of benevolence can inspire money; it was the gold itself he loved. Formerly he had seldom had the opportunity to rub two coppers together; now his one amusement was to sit with a roll of sovereigns, slowly dropping them from one hand to the other, and listening with pitiful glee to the music they made.

By-and-by he found another occupation in watching with greedy interest Methven's movements and progress. He began to consider who were Methven's relations; to speculate upon the possibility that all the great fortune of his benefactor might descend to himself. The possibility grew into probability, and then into assurance that nobody else could be or would be Methven's heir. He became jealous of every creature who approached him, hunted them away, or with transparent cunning warned his pupil that they had designs upon him. The last stage of his mania was soon reached; without

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the slightest regard to the difference between them in years, the old man waited for the comparatively young man's death.

One day Singgy was thrown into a frenzy, upon learning that George Methven's father—the Laird, now a ruined man—was with his son. He revived when he saw the Laird go away with head bowed, humbled and evidently disappointed. All his efforts to learn the result of his visit failed, and he never quite recovered from the effects of the fright it had given him. He took ill—died—railing at his benefactor, wildly accusing Methven of having cheated him, robbed him, and poisoned him. It does, in certain moods, appear unkind of other people to outlive us.

Methven buried his old teacher quietly, erecting a plain marble slab to his memory, inscribed with nothing more than his name and date of death. He never again tried to make a friend. Friendship and love seemed denied to him, more decidedly now that he was rich than when he had been a poor laddie, herding sheep on the hill side, striving to acquire knowledge and to attain the something which he had missed, notwithstanding his marvellous success.

"But work cures everything," was his constant cry; regrets, the loss of hope, shame, all yield to work."

So he worked harder than ever, and fortune still favoured all his efforts. In his office, in his house, he was always at work. He sat late in his study; he was there early in the morning; and one morning he was found seated at the writing table, pen in hand, the lamp still burning, although the sun was up, his eyes fixed upon a blank sheet of paper. He was dead: the cause—paralysis.

There was no will; and that circumstance astounded every one who had known the methodical habits of the man. One feasible explanation was suggested by the solicitors who had transacted much business for the deceased: that it had been Mr. Methven's intention to distribute his wealth whilst living, and thus he had omitted to prepare a will. Whether that was the case or not, there was a great fortune going a-begging for an heir.

CHAPTER II.

THE FISHER-FOLK.

THE cottage of Dan Thorston stood on the high point known as the Norlan' Head, overlooking a little bay, round which the huge black and brown rocks formed a rugged horse-shoe. A few steps from the door of the cottage, was the opening of a perilous footpath which wound round the rocky walls of the bay, down to the pale yellow sand where lay Dan's boat, and where, in a sheltered corner, he had a tar-painted hut for his oars and fishing tackle. The cottage was like two buildings placed lengthwise together, the one being smaller than the other. The walls were of unhewn stone, white-washed; the roof, thatch—in colour, a piebald of brown and green—and the two big squat chimneys were carefully bound with straw-rope. It was a weather-beaten building, for it was exposed to every wind that blew. That was why Dan made it his home.

Wind and sea were his comrades; he loved them; they spoke to him—he understood them, and he was happiest when in close communion with them. There was something of the old Viking in his heart, and much of the Norse blood in his veins. When any one spoke of the dangers of stormy seas, he laughed in wonder. He seemed to have no sense of danger; and in this respect his daughter, Christina, or Teenie as she was always called, resembled him.

"It was just frightsome to see her," was the opinion of the wives of Rowanden—women who were not cowards—as she clambered over the rocks; or when in the wildest weather, she stood on the Norlan' Head, gazing at the storm, and apparently taking delight in the furious strife of the elements. There was something "uncanny" about the bairn, was the unanimous verdict.

Thorston and his daughter were much respected, but in many minds the respect was dashed with a degree of fear. "Master"

or "Skipper" Dan, as he was called, on account of a share he had in a small whaling vessel, was supposed to be endowed with a special gift for forecasting the weather. At early morn his movements were eagerly observed. If when he looked out he thrust his hands into his pockets, as if satisfied with the appearance of affairs, there was a general race for the boats and a struggle who should be out first. But if Dan raised his hand to his brow, as if to concentrate his vision upon some object far out at sea, every man turned into his cot again with the growl, "There will be nae fish the-day."

Dan had not sought this singular reputation; but having formed it, he was proud of it—sometimes, even, he would catch himself stooping to some little trick to heighten the fishers' faith in him, and he would feel ashamed of himself. When away upon a whaling expedition, it gratified him to think that he would be missed at Rowanden; that he would be joyfully welcomed home; and that, during his absence, Teenie would be guarded and cared for as if she were queen of the land.

Although the village of Rowanden was near neighbour to the town of Kingshaven, and had many friendly transactions with it, the two communities were quite distinct. The first was entirely composed of fisher-folk; the second contained the usual mixed population which gathers around flaxmills, ship-building yards, fish-curing establishments and agricultural markets. The first stuck fast to its old ways and old superstitions; the second was eager to be in advance of the time, and was never done shouting "Progress," as if the mere word were a charm by which miracles could be wrought. The fishers looked on stolidly, and would not believe in the new charm. The nuisance inspector was, in their eyes, himself the nuisance. Folk had lived and died comfortably for hundreds of years before there had been any ado about drainage and atmosphere, and they could not see why they should not be permitted to go on living and dying in their own way, as their fathers had done.

The village, from a distance, looked like an irregular pile of whitewashed walls diversified by sheets of black, red, and dark grey, where tar-coated huts, red-tiles, or thatch prevailed. Closer inspection showed that the village and its belongings formed three terraces, one rising above the other. First there was the shore, on which were groups of boats, tall stakes over-

hung with nets like huge cobwebs, black huts for housing oars, cords, floats, baskets, and other fishing gear ; in the background, a dark wall of rock, in which a steep flight of steps had been cut, leading up to the shelf or terrace above. Here were piles of nets, dried, mended, and ready for use ; and upon them lounged men and boys, in rough blue trousers and jackets, smoking, gossiping, and repairing other nets. The women, stout limbed and healthful, in big white caps, short grey or red-striped petticoats, thick blue or grey stockings, and heavy boots, were busy at large tubs cleaning and salting fish, or preparing bait. On the walls were rows of haddocks drying ; heaps of refuse dotted the sides of the roadway, and the fine fishy atmosphere could be *tasted*. The third row of houses was approached by a steep pathway ; and behind this upper row were patches of vegetable gardens, then rocks and fields.

On the top of the hill stood a white house—the manse ; on the gable facing the village, the minister had placed a large barometer for the benefit of the fishers. During a storm which continued for several days, the women marched up to the manse and prayed the minister to set the weather-guide to “fair.” He endeavoured to explain the nature of the instrument ; but the women were not satisfied. They believed in Skipper Dan’s weather-wisdom—they could not believe in this strange machine ; so they took stones and smashed it. Soon after, the weather changed for the better, and old Tibbie Gow, who had been a ringleader in the outrage on the barometer, exclaimed triumphantly—

“I tell’t ye how it would be !—it’s just thae newfangled whig-maleeries that’s setting a’-things wrang. We maun take care o’ the minister, for he’s a guid sort o’ sowl, though he’s weak, like a’ man bodies.”

But foul weather came again, notwithstanding ; wives were widowed and children left fatherless, just as before. Tibbie Gow, however, firmly believed that the storms might have been subdued if she could have only offered to each the sacrifice of a barometer.

There was another ado in the village when the railway was planned and made. The first intimation of the appearance of a train was given by Willie Stark—a man in years, but a child in mind. He had been at Kingshaven one winter evening, and

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on his way home he saw a train. He burst into his mother's cottage, crying in much wonder—

"Ph, mither, mither! what do you think I saw but the smiddy running awa wi' a row of houses!"

Another report was made by David Finnie, an old man, who, expressly to see this new monster called a train, walked over to the hill through which a tunnel had been made. He took his stand on the height and observed the animal approaching.

"But I didna think muckle o' her," he said contemptuously; "she came on panting and panting, and tried hard to get up the hill, but as soon as she saw ME!—she just gie'd a great traich, and ran into a hole."

They were slow to appreciate modern improvements, but they were an honest, sturdy race. Simple in heart, and in many respects commonplace enough in nature, their coarseness was leavened by their kindness, and by a certain unconscious humour in their ways and sayings. Rugged in form and speech as their own rocky coast, they were capable of the tenderest sympathy for the suffering, and of much self-sacrifice to help a neighbour in peril or misfortune. Every bay, every cavern along the coast had its name and legend; every one of the rocky islets, which rose like strange monsters from the sea, dripping and flashing their watery diamonds in the sunlight, was a monument of some sad loss or of some brave deed of rescue. There was the black-looking rock near the bar, ominously named "the Wrecker," on account of the many disasters for which it was accountable. One of the latest incidents which had justified its evil repute was the destruction of a cobble from a northern fishing station.

It was midday, and the sea was in one of its angry moods. There were three men and a boy in the cobble; they attempted to cross the bar, but the boat struck the rock and capsized. Men, women, and children hastened down to the beach, and six stalwart fellows put off to the rescue. The boy was seen clinging to the keel of the upturned boat, and his piteous cries were heard by those on shore. A great wave was rolling towards him; it would break above him and destroy him. The people held their breath as they watched the race between the destroyer and the rescue. A woman at whose breast clung a frightened infant, whilst her eyes were fixed upon the boy in

such sore need out yonder, gave voice to the prayer of all who stood by—

“God! be near him—he’s some one’s bairn!”

The boy and one of the men were saved.

This was the kind of legend which formed part of the fisher-folk’s lives, and, in their eyes, endowed rocks and sea and wind with a spiritual significance. They had a plain matter-of-fact way of speaking about things spiritual as well as temporal. Providence was a real presence to them; He walked amongst them, noted their doings, and promptly punished the sinners. They spoke of Him with a familiarity which would have startled a stranger. They carried this matter-of-fact spirit even to their tombstones, on one of which appeared this droll epitaph:

“Here lies poor Susan Gray;
She would if she could, but she could not stay.
She had two bad legs and a very bad cough,
But it was the two bad legs that carried her off.”

It was written in all seriousness. The conversation of the men was mostly occupied with questions as to the state of the fishing, accidents to the stakes and to comrades, quarrels with the water-bailies in close-time and out of it. Sick men and plasters, with an occasional diversion about the price of fish and provisions, engaged the tongues of the elder women. Rheumatism was an enemy they had frequent struggles with; and they encountered him with vigorous measures.

“Sandy’s just that bad he canna move hand or foot,” said Jean Watt to a cronie; “but he’s had mustard and vinegar on at the foot o’ the shoulder-blades, and a batter as big as your twa hands, and I canna tell you how muckle salts he’s taken, so I’m thinking he’ll be some better the-morn. What are you paying for tatties now?”

Teenie Thorston grew up amongst these fisher-folk, sharing in their superstitions, listening to their eerie stories, to their merry or sad ballads—one of themselves apparently, and yet curiously unlike them. “Uncanny,” said all; “a bairn of the storm,” said some; “a sea kelpie,” said old David Finnie, grinning at his own conceit.

“Eh, but she’s bonnie,” sighed the youths who looked at her, yearning, and dare not speak.”



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CHAPTER III.

THE BOOK OF FATE.

SHE stood at the door of the cottage. A clear day. She could see miles of the bare coast-line guarded by its savage battlements of rocks; the busy port of Kingshaven, nestling in its natural bay, and behind, long stretches of moorland melting into fields of ripe grain, which rolled upward to the mountains, whose bright green plains hung upon the edge of black valleys. Before her, the opal sea, always restless, often furious, flecked with foam and fishing smacks. The colour deepened as the waters reached the horizon, and through a white haze mingled with the sky. All the wrath of the sea appeared to be close at hand; out yonder there seemed to be a placid mere, from which came long sweeping waves, graceful, and so calm in their strength, lifting their white crests, beneath which flashed the colours of the rainbow, trembling an instant in the sunlight, then dipping and curving with such gentle lines shoreward, that it seemed a lover in his happiest mood hastening to kiss his mistress. But as they neared the shore the waves became turbulent, rose in white jagged points, broke in spiteful foam upon the rocks, and retired moaning, disappointed. Within that hazy horizon line those who looked from shore saw, for themselves or those who were dear to them, rough work and danger enough; beyond it, the discontented or ambitious imagined mysterious possibilities, and gazed long, with vague yearnings; until, by-and-by, quickened by necessity or hope, some broke the ties of the old home, and sailed out into the mists of new worlds, to find fortune or despair.

At times Teenie was conscious of these vague yearnings, and became restless as the sea she loved.

There was a large dove-cot above the door of the cottage; the pigeons were continually fluttering about the roof, cooing and pluming themselves. They were Teenie's pets; they would gather around her, sit on her shoulders, on her arms, and peck

from her hand, but they took flight as soon as a second person appeared. This familiarity with animals was regarded as an other element of uncanniness in her character.

The pigeons were flocking about her now. One fine fellow, with a grand sheeny blue breast, was marching up and down before her, cr-r-ooing, dipping his head at intervals to give emphasis to his guttural notes, and patronising his mates with all the pomposity of the provost at a tea-meeting. Teenie spoke to her pets occasionally, but she was much occupied looking down the road towards the village which lay below her, Kingshaven behind it, yellow and black in the sunlight, its church tower and dissenting steeple rising sharp and clear against the sky.

She stood with the left hand resting on her hip, the other now playing with the fringe of the little blue scarf which was pinned round the neck, and again raised to shade her eyes from the bright rays of the sun. A tall sinewy lass, with wavy fair hair, and plenty of it, hanging down her back; big blue eyes; soft rounded features, sun-browned and healthful. Her dress a simple stuff gown, apron, white stockings, and thick-soled shoes. There was a sense of grace and strength in her appearance—beauty, in fact; the light of blissful ignorance of sorrow in her eyes, and a smile on her lips.

She saw a woman with a square yellow basket on her arm, marching up the hill. Teenie's whole face beamed with delight; pressing her elbows to her sides, her pets were scattered right and left as she sprang forward to meet the woman, all the poetry of emotion in her joyful bounding pace.

"Have you gotten it, Ailie?" she cried.

Alison nodded, and Teenie clapped her hands gleefully.

"Eh, but that's fine! Come on; let's try it at once!"

Catching the woman's sleeve, she dragged her towards the house, impatient of her pace, although Alison Burges, having the bones and muscles of a man, walked with the stride of one. Alison was about sixty—clean, neat, and fresh, from the white cap with its huge frill on her head to the clumsy but serviceable boots on her feet. She had long dry features, marked with red marble lines; pale grey eyes, in which there was plenty of shrewdness, but not a glimpse of tenderness apparent. She yielded to the impulsive girl, but neither smiled nor frowned.

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Inside the house, Alison placed the basket on the table, wiped her dry mouth with the corner of her apron, rested her hands on her sides, and then, shaking her head slowly, she exclaimed, in a singing tone which might have indicated pity or surprise, or both—

“ Eh, Teenie, Teenie, you may die for want o’ breath, but no for want o’ wiles.”

Teenie laughed, and said, “ Haste you.”

Alison deliberately sat down on a wooden chair, the back of which formed a rough imitation of a lyre. Then she lifted her skirts, and after much fumbling found a capacious leathern pouch, from which she produced a small pamphlet, printed on dingy coarse paper. This Alison handled respectfully, and laying it on her knee with much care smoothed out the creases.

The sun seemed to flash on Teenie’s face. She dropped on her knees, crying—

“ Let’s see it ; let’s see it ! ”

It was one of those penny chap-books which at one time were extensively sold throughout the country by pedlars, and which constituted the chief literature of the people, affording them, in the long winter evenings, delight, wonder, and material for conversation when they gathered round the kitchen fire. The chap-books comprised sheets of songs, anecdotes—not always particular in regard to delicacy—tales of the Covenant Martyrs, sermons, biographies (one sheet contained the lives of all the Kings of England, from Arthur to George III.), and half a dozen different instructors in the arts of fortune-telling and charm-working, each professing to unveil the future to the dullest eyes. Amongst the sheets of verse, “ Chevy Chase ” and “ Thrummy Cap ” were the most popular. Of the serious works a favourite one was “ The Life and Wonderful Prophecies of Donald Cargill, who was Executed at the Cross of Edinburgh, on the 26th July, 1680, for his Adherence to the Covenant and Work of Reformation.” The most read of the ghost-stories was “ The Laird of Cool’s Ghost ; ” whilst by far the best relished of the humorous sheets was “ The Life and Wonderful Sayings of Geordie Buchanan, the King’s Fool.” That was George Buchanan, the poet and historian, who, when tutor to the Scottish Solomon, proved his independence by quickening the wits of

his majesty by the help of a birch—and he became famous amongst his countrymen in later days as the King's Fool !

The chief favourite of the fortune-telling sheets was the one which Alison held in her hand, entitled "Napoleon Bonaparte's Book of Fate." Beneath the title was a smudgy wood engraving which represented Bonaparte, in dancing pumps with round buckles, standing on a rock ; arms folded on his breast, head bowed, and the smear of ink intended to indicate his eyes, supposed to be gazing sadly into space, or at four black spots beneath him which symbolised anything the imagination of the onlooker might suggest.

Turning over the leaf Teenie saw a curious table, called grandly "THE ORACULUM." She had not the least idea what that hard word meant, and therefore looked with some awe at the mystery.

The table was divided into small squares, each occupied by a letter of the alphabet ; along the top were a series of asterisks arranged in various forms, thus—

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and so on. The left-hand side of the page was occupied by sixteen interesting questions :—1. Shall I obtain my wish ? 2. Shall I have success in my undertakings ? 3. Shall I gain or lose in my cause ? 4. Shall I have to live in foreign parts ? etc.

This looked delightfully cabalistic and promised some amusement.

But there was no suspicion of fun in Alison's mind. She understood the working of the oracle and respected it. She made Teenie write at random four lines of dots. They counted the first line and found that the number of the dots was even, so Teenie was told to mark two dots opposite the end of the first line. The number of the next line was odd, so one dot was scored beneath the first two ; the third line even—two dots

again; the fourth line odd, which gave one dot; the whole

producing a figure like this— . . . and corresponding with the second square of asterisks.

"Now," said Alison solemnly, and lowering her voice as if fearing to mar the spell which was being worked, "what question would you like to speir?"

A moment of hesitation, and Teenie pointed to the first question—

"Shall I obtain my wish?"

Alison traced with her forefinger the line of the question till it came to the letter B, beneath the asterisks corresponding with the form of Teenie's six dots. She wetted her thumb, and slowly turned over the leaves till she came to the page at the top of which was a big black B. Down the side of the page were asterisks similar to those of the "Oraculum," and opposite the second figure was the answer to Teenie's question: * * "Whatever your desires are, for the present decline * * them."

The light of expectation and hope left the girl's face. She knotted the fringe of her scarf and absently tried to unravel: Then she laughed as if at her own doubts, and said boldly:

"We'll try it again, Ailie."

Alison was astounded at this irreverence.

"You're not allowed to try the same question twice in the same day; it's no lucky, and it would spoil the charm."

"Then we'll try another one," cried fearless Teenie.

The dotting process was repeated, and after grave consideration Teenie sought the answer to this important question—

"Does the person love and regard me?"

The answer was found—"This love is from the heart and will continue until death."

"That's fine!" she cried, delighted and ready to believe in the oracle, now that its promise accorded with her wishes. She repeated the gratifying words with a kind of wondering pleasure, as if listening to some one.

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the reckless or defiant spirit in which the gambler throws his last stake, she demanded—

“Will the marriage be prosperous?”

The answer was given—“Various misfortunes will attend this marriage.”

“It’s just nonsense,” Teenie exclaimed, jumping up, indignant. But the cloud passed immediately; she stooped and whispered to Alison, “And the book does not tell true—for I’ve got my wish, and there he is at the door!”

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CHAPTER IV.

YOUNG DALMAHOY.

IT was Walter Burnett, Dalmahoy's son, who was at the door. And what was the Laird's son doing there? People had been asking that question frequently of late, with suggestive looks, sly winks, or foreboding shakes of the head. There was no particular reason for this questioning, except that he was the Laird's son and she was Dan Thorston's daughter. But Walter—or young Dalmahoy, as he was generally called to distinguish him from his father, old Dalmahoy—Walter had been from childhood accustomed to visit the cottage.

He used to go out fishing with Thorston, and Teenie—a bare-legged cutty then, flying about in healthy recklessness—used to find bait for the big boy, who brought her handfuls of sweeties in exchange. Often she would go out in the boat with them, and she would mend Walter's lines, or bait the hooks when the fish was taking fast, whilst Thorston sat guiding the bark, watching the sail, and attending to his own lines. The boat leaping over the waves, the brown sail flapping between the man and the children, the latter would gossip in this fashion:

She: "Ha'e you got a bite?"

He: "I think there was a nibble."

"Your bait will be off."

"No, I saw the float bobbin'—there!—aha, I've got him this time!"

He would draw in the line, hand-over-hand, she bending over the side, eyes wide, eagerly watching the arrival of the prize. Then at the first silvery flash in the water, she would clap her hands, crying—

"Eh, it's a fine ane—it's a codlin—ca' canny or you'll miss him."

That accident happened occasionally, when Walter in his enthusiasm, panting and anxious, sensible that the hook was not

secure in the gills of the fish, was straining his strength as if to convey the energy of his own desire into the line; the prize rose to the surface, half out of the water, and then—snap! a silver gleam, and fish and hook disappeared, a wave washing the boy's heated face with spray.

"Hoot, you fool!" was Teenie's exclamation, "you've lost him, and he was such a bonnie one. You'll no get another chance like that."

And she would turn contemptuously from him to the lines, whilst Walter, looking sheepish and disappointed, would humbly prepare to try his fortune again.

"You canna catch a' the fish in the sea," Dan would say consolingly, as he quietly hauled in a brace of whittings.

The brave breeze, the refreshing salt smell of the sea, the inspiring pulsations of the boat, and another "bite," presently dispelled from the boy's mind all remembrance of his disappointment, and from Teenie's all sense of scorn.

"There now!" he would shout, his cheeks glowing with joy, as success rewarded his next effort.

"Man, but that's fine!" says Teenie, sharing his joy.

There never was the least shyness between them, and no thought of degree. The only difference Teenie was conscious of observing between Walter and the other boys of the neighbourhood was, that his clothes were never ragged and seldom patched—they were patched sometimes. The material of them—a rough tweed—was not in childish eyes a bit finer than the coarse homespun of the other loons. Then, like them, he went to the parish school, got his palmies like the rest, scrambled and fought amongst them, conquered or got beaten just like an ordinary boy. It was the proper training for a sturdy youth; and even if he had been in the least priggish or "upsetting," he would have been speedily taught, by the fists of his school-mates, that in the republican playground the strong arm carries the day.

After the parish school—at which girls as well as boys obtained their first lessons, and competed in the same classes—came the academy at Kingshaven. Every morning Walter, with his brothers and sisters, took his breakfast of porridge and milk in the kitchen—sometimes, as an indulgence, he was allowed to have a cup of coffee—and then he trudged off to the

Academy, four miles distant. Besides books he carried in his satchel his "twal-hours" or "piece"—plain bannocks and cheese generally; or, rare delight, a penny in his pouch, with which to buy for his noonday meal the coveted delicacy, a treacle-bapp—a scone of coarse flour cut open and spread with treacle.

On his way home he would halt at the cottage, to hear from Dan some wild story of his whaling adventures, or to tell Teenie how many marbles he had won during the play-hour, or maybe to play a game at "ringgy" with her, or to help her in making some alteration in the dovecot. Then he would trudge on to his motherless home to supper—six o'clock—the preparation of his lessons for the following day, "a chapter," prayers, and bed. Occasionally the evenings were diversified by a merry hour spent with his cousin Grace Wishart, to whom he was accustomed to appeal for help in all his boyish troubles. She was his senior by two or three years—a vast period in childish eyes—and her quiet ways made her appear to Walter quite a woman. Teenie was his playmate; Grace was his guide and counsellor.

On one occasion, for some slight ailment he was taken by his nurse to Dr. Lumsden—then beginning to be recognised as the established surgeon of the district. Walter's old nurse, who believed him to be the most wonderful boy that had ever been born, assured the doctor that the "laddie fashed himself far ower muckle with books."

"You mean that he studies too much," said Dr. Lumsden pompously.

"Jist that—he's aye reading and stealing candles to read with when a' decent folk are bedded."

"Indeed! and what does he read?"

"I dinna ken—he reads the Bible for ae thing."

"A very excellent work," said the doctor, with something like patronage of the book and the boy in his tone.

"And he reads Burns."

The doctor looked disappointed.

"And he reads Shakespeare, and that's a' I ken about."

The doctor lifted his nose contemptuously. He was a man of middle age, who by very severe effort had passed through college, and obtained his degree. The moment he had touched his first fee, he felt that he was a superior person to all and

everything around him. He knew little of Burns, for he never had time to indulge in miscellaneous reading; nothing of Shakespeare except by report; and he was conscious of being practically much better than either of these persons—morally, infinitely their superior.

"Very trivial reading indeed," he said scornfully.

Had she told him the boy had been reading the *Materia Medica*, he would have called that study; but the idea of applying the word study to such ephemeral works as those of Burns and Shakespeare!

"His stomach is disordered—he only needs a powder," concluded the doctor decisively.

The powder was compounded, the boy never took it, and he recovered!

By-and-by came the important change from home to the university, and the decision as to a profession. The Laird had certain ideas about minerals, and therefore wished Walter to become an engineer. Walter was delighted with the idea, and for a while devoted himself arduously to physics and mechanical science. But, slowly at first, and then rapidly, there took place a transformation in the character of the youth—it was really a development—and to the surprise of everybody he determined to enter the ministry. He had been always regarded as such a light feather of a youth, stirred and influenced by every wind that blew, that it was difficult for those who knew him to imagine him capable of fulfilling the grave duties of a parish minister.

The Laird was angry, and all the more so that his neighbours were quite satisfied that Walter was unfitted for the services and responsibilities he was so boldly and recklessly, not to say presumptuously, about to undertake.

It was not the responsibility which affected the Laird, but the destruction of a long-cherished scheme.

Walter, however, was resolute, and so he applied himself to the study of theology—still keeping up his acquaintance with Burns and Shakespeare. He was full of enthusiastic aspirations but was curiously unconscious of his own growth. He never thought of himself as a man, and he paid a kind of boyish respect to his seniors. He sometimes had visions of marriage, a happy home in some quiet manse near the sea, and a great

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work to be done in helping others; but that was such a long way off in the future that the visions were very dim. So it was that he was very slow to realize the fact that Teenie had become a woman. But a word was spoken—"I am smart—I will carry her off before long," said one of his college friends in the course of a summer day's ramble—and Walter awakened from a dream. He felt shy, and amused with himself; he felt awkward, and puzzled with himself.

Teenie went blithely to the door, and threw it open.

"I knew you would come," she said, looking up with her clear frank eyes into the face of the man.

He was a tall fellow, dressed in grey tweed. The welcome pleased him, and with the smiling curiosity of one who is amused by the drollery of a child, he asked—

"And how did you know I would come, Teenie?"

"Because I dreamed you were sailing away out on the sea, never to come back, and dreams go by contraries!"

"Were you frightened when you saw me sailing away?"

"No; what would I be frightened for?—Hoosh, cat!—she's always trying to worry the doos."

Teenie threw a stone at a large tortoise-shell cat, which had been patiently watching an opportunity to pounce upon one of the pigeons.

"Frightened that I might not return," he said, continuing the conversation.

"Oh, but I knew you would come back."

"You would trust me then, no matter what others might say?"

"I suppose so," she answered somewhat carelessly, for she did not observe the seriousness of his tone.

"But if I did not come back, you would be sorry?"

"I dare say I would, for a while at any rate."

"Only for a while!" he cried, making a wry face.

"Yes; what more? did you not tell me that we would be awful miserable creatures if we could not forget?"

"So we would; but for all that I would not like you to forget me, for that would be a sign you did not care much for me."

"Oh, but I do care a great deal for you."

"More than for anybody else?"

"I cannot say that" (thoughtfully).

With a mock tragical air he said—

"Would you die for me?"

"I am quite sure I would not," she answered with disagreeable frankness.

"What?" he exclaimed, laughing, "if you saw me in the bay there, and the waves dashing me about like a shuttlecock, and heard me crying, 'Teenie, Teenie, come, or I'll be drowned'—wouldn't you try to save me?"

"To be sure I would, and I would do the same for any other poor creature in such a pass."

Although he had been speaking apparently in jest, he did not quite enjoy the answer. Only a little while ago she had been questioning the future about her relations with this man; and yet here she was speaking as if she cared no more for him than for anybody else! But she had neither desire nor intention to deceive him. She had a child's reckless way of uttering the thought which happened to be uppermost, without the least speculation as to the effect her words might produce on the hearer. She saw that he was not satisfied.

"Why do you ask me these questions," she said, "If you do not like me to answer them?"

"But I do like you to answer them, only—in another way. Let us go down to the bay, and I'll tell you a story."

"Yes, and I'll tell you the ploy I had with Ailie this morning.—I'll be back in a while, Ailie," she added, thrusting her head in at the door.

Then she darted off after Walter, who was walking towards the path which led down the face of the rock to the bay. She passed him, and sprang down the steep path; he followed quickly, and yet was far behind her. She seemed to bound along with the buoyancy and brightness of a wavelet upon which the sun is flashing. He watched her, admiration and a kind of wonder in his eyes.

She stood on the yellow sand, throwing back her long hair, as the wind tossed it on her face and round her neck—looking up and laughing at the laggard. What could he make of this bright creature?—at one moment she was such a child in thought

and desire, and in the next, a woman of prompt word and action.

"Is it no fine?" she cried pointing to the sea, her eyes reflecting its colours; "do you no hear the waters bamffling on the bonnies, and do you no see the bonnie tarns of silver and gold the sun is making out yonder? Oh, I would just like to be aye sailing, sailing on the bonnie water."

"Aye, but there are storms and wrecks as well as sunshine, Teenie."

"What a pity!" she said, her face darkening whilst she continued to gaze with vague questioning across the sea. What's at the other side—land, and folk something like ourselves?"

"Yes and water again, and land; and if you went on far enough, you would just come back to where you started from."

She laughed, and the cloud passed away from eyes and face.

"It's scarcely worth while starting then."

She seated herself on a large stone beside a boat which lay dry on the sand, smelling of tar and fish. Walter sat on the boat, and tiny waves rippled up to their feet, casting bits of sea-weed and specks of foam towards them. The brown rocks with their many black clefts, rose up high around them; and the two seemed to be shut into a little world of their own, from which there was only one outlet—the big one, so easy to pass, opening upon the great sea, and its storms and wrecks, as well as its sunshine.

CHAPTER V.

HIS STORY.

HE began, looking at her with the quiet smile of assurance which brightens the face of a lover who is certain of acceptance.

"Once upon a time——"

"It is a fairy story," she interrupted, whilst she proceeded to plait long strips of seaweed into true lover's knots.

"It will be just what you like to make it."

"What I like to make it?" Her busy fingers paused, and she looked up at him with a curious expression of wonder and doubt. She was thinking of the Book of Fate, and speculating in what fashion its contradictory predictions were to be fulfilled. She resumed her work with the brown wet weeds, singing low, as if to herself, a snatch from an old ballad—

"Syne she's gar'd build a bonnie boat,
To sail the salt salt sea;
The sails were of the light green silk,
The tows [ropes] of taffety."

"You're a droll lass. What put that song into your head just now?"

"Thinking about your story, I suppose, and how I'm to make it what I like."

"You'll see. Well, once upon a time there was a loon—suppose we give him my name, just for fun—and there was a lass——"

The platting of the seaweed ceased again, but she did not look up.

"Suppose we give the lass my cousin's name—Grace."

Teenie's fingers worked more rapidly than ever; one might have fancied there was even a degree of spite in their energy.

"The loon was very fond of Grace," he went on, "and she liked him; at any rate, she often helped him out of the scrapes

he blundered into. So one day Wat's father says to him, 'There, sir, when you are old enough you shall marry her. She is a fine lass, and she has a fine bit of land that will be worth a ransom when the coal and iron are worked, but keep your thumb on that. Be kind to her, and see that she does not slip through your fingers; for let me tell you that beyond your education you have nothing to get from me.'

"And what did the loon say to that?"

"Nothing. He did not know what he could say; but he laughed to himself at the notion of his own marriage; for *then* it seemed to be only a funny notion. So the affair came to be looked upon by all his friends as quite settled, and they thought the arrangement a lucky one for him. But by-and-by Wat began to feel that he had got into another scrape; for one fine morning he came to look seriously into himself, and he discovered that if ever he married the woman who had all his heart, Grace would not be his wife."

Teenie plaited and sang another snatch of the ballad—

"She sailed it round, and sailed it round,
And loud, loud cried she—
'Now break, now break, ye fairy charms,
And set my true love free.'"

He rested his elbow on his knee, and his chin on his hand, thus bringing his face down close to hers.

"What was he to do then?" he said earnestly. "He was, in a way, bound to Grace, and yet he could not marry her without doing her a grievous wrong, besides laying up for himself a future of discontent and regret; and maybe the woman he loved would also be a sufferer. He would have done a great deal to save either of those lassies from pain; but it seemed as if injury to one or both must follow, whichever way he turned."

"Was he no himself to blame for it at all?" she said, almost wickedly.

"He was, and he did not spare himself. The circumstances caused him many weary nights and troubled days. What made his position the more painful was, that he had quite recently undertaken the solemn responsibilities of a minister—undertaken to teach duty to others—and here he was doubting about

his own on the very threshold of his work. What was he to do?"

"Maybe he went to Grace and asked her," she said, so quietly that the gentle splash of the water on the sand at their feet almost drowned her voice.

But Walter heard, and he was glad to hear.

"He did so; and he went to her, determined to submit to her decision, whatever it might be. She had helped him in many difficulties before, and he knew that she would help him to do what was right in this one."

"She must be very good. I would not like a man to come to me on such an errand."

"Aye, Teenie, she is good." His hand dropped on hers, his eyes glowing with enthusiasm, and he forgot the imaginary character in whose name he had thus far spoken. "On my way to her house I formed all sorts of plans for telling her my purpose gently. In this way I would ask her forgiveness, in that way I would try to explain how bitter had been the struggle with myself before I had dared to take this step, but my plans were useless. After the first bungling word she seemed to understand everything. 'Don't speak, Walter. Wait,' she said; and I stood there, dumb. I felt so contemptible in my own eyes, as well as in hers."

Teenie began to tear her true lover's knots of seaweed into shreds, and to drop them on the sand.

His face looked cold and white; he went on, with a kind of subdued pain in his voice and manner—

"She turned away from me, but I knew the beauty of the face which was hidden from me, or rather the beauty of the soul which it reflects, and I remembered her affliction. It seemed as if my duty only became clear to me at that moment; it was to be faithful and helpful to her—to put away as best I could the cravings of my own heart, and to try to make her life happy. Was not that right?"

"I dare say" (slowly, and as if she were speaking whilst her thoughts were occupied with other matters).

"I am glad you think so," he said eagerly, as if she had given the fullest assent to his question, "and I tried to tell Grace that. But she came quietly up to me and put her hands on my shoulders, just as she used to do when I had made some

blunder at home, and she persuaded me to acknowledge my fault and promise to be good.

"'Thank you, Walter,' she said; 'I am very happy in feeling that you love me well enough to think of making the sacrifice you propose. But you would be foolish and wrong to make it; I would be still more foolish to accept it. You have been brave and right to come and tell me this, and I thank you for that too. But I have long expected it. Don't trouble yourself about me. I am glad that this happens before our marriage instead of after. Oh, I have often thought of the possibility of your meeting somebody younger, brighter than myself, and I am glad that it happens now. Go to her; tell her that she shall have no truer or fonder friend than me. And, to relieve you from all doubt in the matter, let me tell you as I shall tell the Laird to-morrow—I will not marry you, Walter Burnett, whatever may happen.'

"I argued very earnestly that it was my wish to do whatever would make her happy. Then she bade me go and do as she had told me. I left her, not satisfied with myself, you may be sure, but feeling that she was right, as she always is, and that if she had yielded to my entreaties we would have both repented when too late.—What is the matter, Teenie?"

Teenie was bending forward, dropping the last fragments of seaweed on the sand, and apparently listening to the melancholy murmur of the water. She looked as if she would cry, but there were no tears in her eyes.

"What is the matter?" he repeated, resting his hand tenderly on her shoulder. Do you not understand the story?"

"Oh, aye, I know very well. I wish I could be like Grace Wishart, but I cannot. She is good—you should have her."

"No, I want you to be my wife, Teenie, and I came to ask you. Will you say yes?"

She was looking anxiously seaward, as if seeking something she could not find. She answered in the same disjointed manner as before—

"I cannot tell what to say—there is nobody I ever thought about that way but you; there is nobody but you I would ever have, and I would like to say yes, but——"

"But what?" (very much surprised at the pause after such frank admissions).

"Ailie and me were reading my fortune to-day—that was the ploy I was to tell you about—and the bookie said that there would be troubles in our marriage. That's the 'but.'"

He was vexed, but the vexation gave way to laughter when she turned her bonnie face up to him, and he saw that she was seriously disturbed.

"What nonsense! and what a silly little lady you are sometimes! You shall say yes!"

"Aye, if——"

He stopped the objection with a kiss, and then he glanced hurriedly upward and round to see if they were observed. Feeling satisfied that they were safe, he seized both her hands, lifted her up, and they began to walk along the sand.

"'If' is a detestable word, Teenie, and you must not use it again. 'If' is a will o' the wisp, deceitful, misleading, and destructive of all moral courage and all hope. The man who fails cries, *if* so-and-so had happened he would have been all right. But the brave man and the brave woman cast the word from them, set teeth hard, and try again, You must give up 'if's,' Teenie, as well as fortune-telling."

It was to him the moment of supreme bliss which comes only once in a life-time—the moment in which the first enthusiastic love of a young heart is declared and accepted. He was ready to prattle about anything, and to laugh at anything—great joy is a brief relapse into childhood. And how beautiful all the world appeared to him then! There was not an ugly thing on the earth. The brown rocks, here darkening and there glowing in the afternoon light, the great sea with its many shades and restless spirit, had never seemed so glorious to him before. He had forgotten all about the storms and shipwrecks: he felt only the sunshine.

She was very quiet; indeed she was a good deal bewildered. She could not realise her own position or his: she submitted to him rather than joined in his ecstasies. She wanted to be his wife; and yet, now that the matter was settled, she did not experience the wild delight she had felt in the anticipation of that event. Perhaps it was the story about Grace Wishart which combined with her fortune-telling exploit to cast a shadow on her pleasure. She did not know, and she could not, even if she had been so minded, seek far for the reason just

then, whilst he, with his grand enthusiasm, was speaking to her. She just knew that she somehow shrank under the great love that he seemed to give her, feeling herself to be unworthy of such a passion.

She did not think of trying to tell him that ; she only felt that she loved him more and more, as she became conscious of her own unworthiness.

He was talking to her about their future. It was not to be a grand one ; they were to begin with very humble means, and he was anxious to explain everything to her, so that there might be no misunderstanding afterwards.

Although he was the Laird's son, he would have nothing but his own efforts to depend upon ; for the Laird's family was large, and his estate now small. Walter had been provided for by an education to his own mind, and a rich wife if he had been willing to accept her. He had rejected the fortune, and all that he could hope for from his father, now, was his consent to a marriage which—it must not be concealed—a second time frustrated his plans for Walter.

But Walter was more than content that everything should go to his brothers and sisters ; he was happy so long as he had Teenie. (Teenie just pressed his hand at that, and looked up at him, smiling. He was rewarded.) He desired nothing, and he needed nothing, but her love ; and since he had that, all the world might go "tapsalteerie" for him. But he had not been rash ; he had thought of her comfort ; and, before speaking, he had obtained the appointment of assistant and successor—if he chose to remain long enough—to the old minister of Drumliemount, at the annual stipend of one hundred pounds ! They could manage with that—could they not ? (Oh, yes, she supposed so.) Other folk managed with less, and he meant to set an example of thrift and simple life, as one of the lessons his office called upon him to teach. But, besides that income, he intended to write for the magazines, and in many ways he hoped—mind you, he only hoped—to make perhaps another hundred a year, upon which they could live comfortably in that out-of-the-way place, and help their neighbours.

And that was the great point : he had adopted his profession because he felt the possibility of helping others in it. He had seen in cities, and in country places, much sin and suffering,

and he believed they could be greatly softened by active religion—he did not attempt to explain what he meant by *active* religion—and he expected Teenie to second him in all his efforts to accomplish the great work that he saw before him.

Teenie did not understand a word of his enthusiastic aspirations, and she was wondering what it was all about, whilst she promised to help him with all her might—and meant what she said.

“But there’s the boat,” she added hastily, withdrawing her hand from his ; for so, hand-in-hand, they had paced the narrow beach, whilst he had poured out his hopes.

Walter looked up as if awakened from a dream ; he had been so much absorbed in talking to Teenie that the whole fleet of England might have passed him unobserved.

The boat, with its brown sail full, had quietly rounded the headland, and, guided by the cunning hand of Dan Thorston, it slipped into the bay, the slanting rays of the sun giving it light and shade, and life. The sail flapped—dropped ; the boat grated on the sand—rolled on one side ; Thorston and one of his two men leapt into the water, caught the impetus of the boat, and lugged it higher up on the beach. Then there was bustle, and many orders to give about the sails, the nets, the landing of the fish, and the securing of the boat, all which Thorston gave in a quiet, hard voice, before he condescended to observe the presence of his daughter and young Dalmahoy. But he had seen her as soon as the boat turned the point ; and so had Ellick Limpitlaw—his chief assistant, and one of the many young fishers who had cast longing eyes at Dan Thorston’s daughter.

As soon as the boat touched the sand, Teenie ran to it, and gave her help in all the work that was going forward, with a glee that was a curious contrast to her passiveness under the enthusiastic outpourings of the man she loved.

CHAPTER VI.

SKIPPER DAN.

"HAD a good shot?" said Walter, pretending to be quite at his ease, and to be deeply interested in the skipper's excursion.

"There's nae mair fish in the sea, I think," answered Dan, but the complaint was made in such a quiet way that you could not discover the least spleen. "We might almost as well draw our nets through the sheughs [gutters] of Kingshaven, and we'd be mair like to get profit there. I'm thinking Peter's ships maun ha'e been less nor ordinar, or his fish maun ha'e been young whales to sink them wi' what his nets could hold. My boat would na sink if the fishes was sliding ower the gunwale, and it's no bigger than its neighbours."

Thorston was never known to admit that he had made a good haul or "shot."

"Better luck next time, skipper."

"Ou aye, that's fine consolation for them that doesna need to care about succeeding *this* time. But it's poor kitchen [sauce] to a man's porridge to tell him he'll ha'e milk next week. Hows'ever, we maunna complain; and let them grumble who likes 't."

And Dan set himself to direct the disposition of his cargo, as if he had been the most contented man in the world. In all that he did Teenie not only helped him with willing and skilful hands, but sometimes guided his arrangements; and he, when unobserved, submitted to her dictation in the humblest way, and with the most implicit obedience; but if he fancied anybody saw them, he acted in direct opposition to her advice, even when that advice suggested the very thing he had been intending to do.

It was observable, on the present occasion, that a frown remained on his brow, as if something had gone wrong about which he was not willing to speak; and he seemed shy of

coming near Walter, adopting all sorts of petty subterfuges to get out of his way.

The fact was that, as they turned the point, Limpitlaw had said to him—

“Do you see yon?”

“See what?” said Thorston, seeing all the time to what his comrade referred, and not liking it, although he did not know why.

“Your daughter and young Dalmahoy. If you dinna see, other folk speak, and it's no for her good that they should be so muckle thegither.”

“Hold your tongue—confound you—if you speak another word like that I'll put your head aneath the water!”

Limpitlaw grumbled to himself, but did not attempt to interfere further.

Whether it was due to the man's suggestion, or to the appearance of Teenie and her lover in such a solitary place, Dan Thorston was troubled. He had been so much accustomed to look upon his daughter and Walter as mere bairns, that he had never, until this moment, suspected danger to either from their intimacy. He did not see even now that there was anything to make a fuss about; and he did not know why folk should talk about his lass, except that they were idle de'ils amusing themselves by casting hot cinders into honest neighbours' porridge.

Yet he was troubled; a word and a glance seemed to have roused him to a sense of quicksands and whirlpools under his feet, where hitherto he had been most unsuspecting of peril. He felt discontented with the land, and everything upon it.

There was a general sense of thunder in the air. Teenie was bright and active as ever, speaking to the men with a familiarity that annoyed Walter, laughing at their jokes, and apparently taking the liveliest interest in all their movements; but there was an element of defiance in her activity. Limpitlaw was dour and slow. Walter spoke a kindly word to him, and received a sullen “thank ye” for his pains, which was more like a sign of wrath than of gratitude.

Walter felt that he had suddenly dropped from the clouds of joy down to a state of awkwardness and shyness which were almost unbearable. He found himself continually in the way of everybody, and once when he tried to give a helping hand,

the result seemed to be more trouble than assistance to the others. When he tried to lift, unaided, a creel full of fish, he staggered, the basket capsized, and the slippery freight rolled out upon the sand. Teenie actually laughed at him, and Limpitlaw, as he slowly set about repairing the disaster, grinned in such a way that Walter thought it would have been a relief to kick him.

They straggled up the path, Teenie first, then Limpitlaw carrying the creel upon his shoulders. Thorston followed with a bundle of nets he purposed mending. To him young Dalmahoy kept close, trying to maintain a conversation, which he found unusually difficult—partly, as he thought, owing to the dry answers of Dan. On the headland Teenie darted into the house, followed slowly by Limpitlaw with his creel.

Thorston halted, looking down the abyss, and Walter stood beside him. The latter spoke, wondering all the time how he was to approach the subject which was uppermost in his thoughts.

"It's an ugly place for a fall."

"Aye, I'm thinking there wouldna be many whole bones left if you had a coup down yonder."

"It's a wonder to me how Teenie and I managed to escape tumbling over these cliffs, when we used to be romping about here as if there was no danger and nothing to fear. You should have put up a fence, skipper."

There was a symbolical meaning in his words of which he was quite unconscious.

"What good would that have done, think ye?" said Dan drily. "Fences are just made to be broken, in my opinion. When there's nae fence you take care of yourself; but when there is a fence, folk and bairns are just tempted to try the strength of it, and so bring about the mischief the fences was intended to prevent."

Walter again found himself wondering what he should say next, because he wanted to say one thing and was trying to say another. Sensibly, he determined to say the one thing.

"Thorston, I want to speak to you upon a subject which may surprise you, and somehow I can't get the words out."

"Say awa."

"I want to marry Teenie."

Walter felt as though he could breathe now. But Dan did not look in the least surprised ; he began quietly to deposit his nets on the ground, and only said—

“Do you ?”

“Yes.”

“And what does she say ?”

“She agrees.”

“Aye, and how long is it since you thought about this ?”

“I cannot tell, but it’s a good while ; and I only waited till I should be placed somewhere, to speak. You’ll not stand in the way of what will bring happiness to us both ?”

Dan looked very sternly at the nets, as if they had been doing something wrong. He slowly passed one through his hands, searching for holes. This done he dropped the net on the pile at his feet. All the time Walter was in suspense to learn his decision. But instead of declaring for or against the proposal he wheeled about to the road, saying—

“Come on.”

“Come where ?” exclaimed Walter, observing that Dan’s steps were not directed towards the cottage.

“To Dalmahoy ; I want to hear what the Laird has to say on the matter.”

Walter was disturbed by this abrupt manner of dealing with his question, particularly as he was anxious that his father should hear Grace Wishart before his desire to marry Teenie should be made known to him. Besides he would have liked an opportunity to speak himself to the Laird.

“Stop a minute,” he said hurriedly, “I have not yet told anything of this to my father.”

“A’ the better,” interrupted Dan, “I’ll tell him. Come on.”

And the skipper looked hard at him, as if he were saying, “If you are honest, what do you fear ?”

“I fear nothing more than that you may stir up unnecessary disagreement,” would have been Walter’s answer to the look, but he replied only to the words, “As you please,” and walked on beside him.

Young Dalmahoy had this peculiarity, that whenever he had anything disagreeable to communicate to any one, he liked to do it himself, and face to face. He knew that it would be very unpleasant to his father to learn that he had again determined

to alter the plans which had been laid down for his future. He expected there would be a very sharp discussion, if not a decided quarrel; and the presence of Dan Thorston would add considerably to the difficulty he would have in explaining everything to his father—for the latter was very likely to speak words which would be offensive to the skipper. What might be the consequences, formed a most uncomfortable speculation.

As for Dan, he marched along with features as grimly set as if he had been on the deck of a vessel in the midst of a wild storm. The whole event had come upon him somewhat suddenly, and he was not yet certain how he ought to act, further than that the first thing to be done was to learn what the Laird's views were upon the subject. It never occurred to him to question Teenie's fitness to become the wife of the Laird's son; in his eyes Teenie was fit to command the Channel fleet. But he had a shrewd notion that other people might not be quite so well satisfied on that point. That rather confused him.

Teenie had been to him, from babyhood almost, a companion, which was an unusual position for the child of a Scotch parent to occupy. She had never known what it was to stand in awe of him, or to wish to get out of the way on seeing him approach. She had been much with him in the bay, in the boats, and at sea. He was a man of great muscle, and yet the child could lead him in whatever direction she pleased—always provided no third person observed them. He was never known to yield in the least to the counsels or prayers of anybody he had dealings with. He was called "thrawart" (stubborn) at first, but by-and-by, as success attended him, he was called a man of firm will. Teenie only laughed, or moved her little finger, and he submitted, and in that submission he seemed to find his greatest happiness.

"She's a witch," he would mutter, watching her bright movements, and wondering at himself, while he chuckled over some new weakness of which he had just been guilty, "and can do what she likes with me. But it pleases her and does me nae harm," he would add for his own consolation.

Suddenly there comes a man and requires him to surrender his treasure, telling him that she too wishes it. It was not

easy for him to decide how to act. The narrow life he had lived had been brightened by few pleasures ; work had been everything to him ; but he remembered now—looking back through mists and stormy waters, through the good and bad fortunes of the sea—how the work had seemed easy to him, thinking of her, and how, in rough winds and darkness, the thought of her had been a light, cheering and comforting him—aye, and giving him courage. It was *not* easy to think of giving her to somebody else, and of acknowledging that he had no longer the first place in her thoughts.

But *she* wished it !—the old, gruff, weatherbeaten man felt something akin to jealousy of Burnett, who was beautiful in the mere possession of youth, and who had thus displaced him in Teenie's heart.

So he was silent and grim as he marched along, and Walter did not attempt to disturb him. They had turned their backs upon Rowanden and the sea. Taking a short cut they passed through a plantation of tall firs. The clear soft light of the afternoon formed brilliant patches of silver beneath the trees, checkered by black shadows. Here the bole of a tree showed white like a woodland nymph laughing as they passed ; close by, another, black and gloomy, as it might be the evil genius of the wood. Hurrying along, it was like flashing glimpses of night and morning. The brown boggy earth yielded to their feet ; rabbits scampered right and left at their approach ; the birds were in full chorus, filling the wood with pleasant sounds, and occasionally a ferret spanned a branch like a streak of light.

They passed out upon the moor ; the sunlight on the heather presented a waste of bright purple, interspersed with clumps of green fern, silver gleams of water, and black patches where the heather had been burnt. Two sportsmen were at work, and the report of their guns sounded in the distance like the crack of a popgun, whilst thin wreaths of blue smoke curled slowly upwards. They were having good sport evidently, for the dogs were busy leaping through the heather, with an occasional yelp ; then back again to the master's side, silent, watchful of his eyes, and ready to spring forward at the least sign.

Thorston and Walter reached a road which crossed the moor to the hills, and by-and-by they entered the gate of Dalmahoy. The grounds were not very extensive, but they were sufficiently

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so to make Dan thoughtful ; and when he found himself in front of the big heavy house, with its many windows and pepperpot turrets, he had come to the consideration that it might be worth while parting with Teenie, if some day, she was to become the mistress of all this property. He did not understand how anybody owning all this could be poor.

They entered the house, and Walter led the way to a parlour. He inquired for his father. The Laird was in the drawing-room, engaged with some visitors. Walter told the servant to ask when Skipper Thorston could see him.

An old man, with a clean-shaven face wearing a mildly depressed expression—as if he had been suffering martyrdom of some kind so long that he had got used to it—returned with the answer. This was Peter Drysdale, butler and general-in-chief under the Laird of Dalmahoy. He paid no attention to Walter, but addressed Dan as an old friend.

“How are you, skipper ? The Laird’s thrang—’deed, I think a’ our relations from far and near have come to see us the-day. What for there’s nae telling ; I’m sure they werena wanted, for the Laird was as muckle put out as mysel’, when he saw them coming that thick you could hardly count them. But the Laird, as soon as he kenned you was here, loupit up and said he would be wi’ you immediately. He was just glad o’ ony excuse to get awa from our friends.”

And apparently Drysdale’s surmise was correct, for presently the Laird walked into the room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAIRD.

THE Laird of Dalmahoy was tall and large-boned ; his features large, except the nose, which was small and inclined upwards ; very few wrinkles, thin grey hair cut short, no hair on the face, and quick keen eyes. Dress neat—a large show of white shirt front, about which he was particular. He was sixty, and would have passed for not more than fifty. In the morning he usually appeared in a dark brown tweed suit, the coat cut short as for a youth. He carried his head high, shoulders square, and was proud to believe that people still regarded him as quite young. He was pleased to be a radical by profession ; he was an intense conservative in fact. He sat in Parliament for the county under several governments. He had promised great things ; he had done nothing. On one occasion he had meditated a speech, when some county affairs engaged the attention of the House.

"Now is my opportunity," he whispered to an old friend who sat beside him.

"For heaven's sake, Hugh, let me out first," exclaimed his friend in a whisper, rising hurriedly to escape the spectacle of the Laird's humiliation.

That crushed the orator in the bud. He never spoke in the House ; and soon afterwards—finding that he was not likely to be returned—he gracefully retired from his onerous position. He was fond, however, of letting off at local meetings, agricultural dinners, or flower shows, or even into the ears of individuals who were sure to listen to him, those fireworks of eloquence which had been intended to set the House in flames.

He liked to be regarded in the character of an enthusiast ; he was constantly theorising about the greatest happiness for the greatest number ; the minority must submit to be sacrificed to the majority. It was the nature of things ; we could see it in the animal, aye, and in the vegetable kingdom ; and

the absolute necessity for an immediate recognition of the law in human affairs was apparent on every hand, in the contentions between class and class which never ceased.

He was perfectly sincere in his declamation and faith in his theory, but he never thought of himself being in the minority; consequently he increased his rents whenever he found an opportunity, he preserved his game strictly, and he held his family in severe subjection, so that his theories and actions were not always in accord; and his enthusiasm—a friend said—was uncommonly like a disguise for a selfish nature. But the Laird was innocent of all intentional hypocrisy. He believed thoroughly in himself and in the honesty of his every word and act.

"Have you come about that Methven business, too?" he said as he entered.

"What Methven business!" asked Dan, surprised.

"Oh!" This was a half-subdued note of astonishment and inquiry, and there was something in it which suggested that the Laird regretted he had spoken so hastily.

He raised his glasses—heavily mounted in gold—and glanced at an open letter in his hand. Then, as he dropped the glasses, he looked at the skipper curiously.

Walter was standing at the window, tapping the sill with his fingers, and gazing out on the lawn. He was puzzled by the readiness with which his father had come to see Dan Thorston, and more so by the question he had asked. Walter had at once associated the name Methven with the millionaire who died recently, and he could not imagine how that event could have anything to do with Dan.

"I care naething about the business you speak of, Laird," said Dan in his dry way; "I came to speak about your son Walter."

"About Walter?" exclaimed the Laird, evidently mystified; "has he been doing anything wrong?"

The son wheeled round and frankly met his father's eyes.

"We'll see about that. He wants to marry my daughter Teenie, and I want to ken what you have to say to it."

"Wants to marry your daughter!" (taking a long breath and looking more astounded than displeased).

"Just that, and though I would as soon see her married to him as to anybody, she shall be wife to nae man whose friends will not make her welcome."

"Quite right—very sensible," muttered the Laird, evidently thinking about something else.

"Let me tell you, too," proceeded Dan quietly, "this has taken me as muckle by surprise as yoursel', and the minute I heard of it I came to you."

"Thank you, Thorston—I would have expected as much from you. Will you excuse me a minute?"

The Laird, with brows knit, again examined the letter he held, and then carefully placed it in a large morocco pocket-book; apparently he was satisfied upon some subject which had engaged his attention.

Walter all this time was watching him, his pulse beating fast with suspense.

The father slowly crossed the room to his son, and looking straight in his eyes, said in an under-tone simply—

"Miss Wishart?"

"She knows;" and Walter felt his cheeks hot whilst his eyes sought the floor. During the last two or three minutes he had been faintly hoping that Grace had already explained.

The Laird bent his head and returned to Dan. Taking up his position on the hearth-rug, one hand behind him, whilst the other played with his glasses and the silk cord by which they were suspended round his neck, he began graciously—

"Take a seat, Thorston, take a seat, please. You see the matter stands somewhat in this fashion. Walter is a fine fellow, he has an excellent head, but his ideas are apt to resemble a midges' dance—they are rather confused. I measured his capacities, as a man of experience and some intellect can measure the capacities of a child constantly under his observation, and I had formed certain plans for him which I believe would have rendered his future one of ease and usefulness.

"As he grows up he thinks that he can form better plans for himself, and accordingly does so. As a father, I might have insisted upon obedience to my wishes; as a man of experience, I say, 'Very well, since you are resolved upon your own course, take it, but absolve me from all blame if you fail.'"

The Laird paused as if for some sign of approbation of his wisdom and forbearance. But Walter could not speak, and Dan was silent, thinking what a gift of language the Laird had, and wondering when he would come to the subject in hand.

"I must own that I am disappointed," Dalmahoy went on; "I think he could have done better than he can do in the Church; I think he could have done better than marry your daughter."

Dan got up.

"Now, now! be patient, *if you please*," exclaimed the Laird, closing his eyes, averting his face, and motioning grandly with the glasses for his auditor to remain seated.

Thorston would not sit again, but he held his tongue, and the oracle proceeded:

"I did not intend the slightest disrespect to your daughter. I admire Christina extremely, and if I had been a younger man I have no doubt the feeling would have been still warmer. But you are aware that the match is, in some respects, unequal—at least, I fear there are some old-fashioned people who will so regard it. Pardon me for saying this; I only desire to place the whole matter plainly before you, in order that there may be no reflections upon me hereafter."

"I'm no asking a favour for Teenie," said the skipper gruffly, and preparing to go; for as he understood the harangue, it meant a refusal of the young folks' wishes. So Walter thought too.

"No favour at all, Thorston; understand me clearly; I am only referring to what will be said by others. For myself, I admire her; I admire your upright, straightforward character, and you know my principles. To me 'an honest man *is* the noblest work of God,' and the observation applies equally to women. Therefore——"

He paused, closing his eyes, and enjoying in imagination the round of applause which that sentence would have evoked at the annual meeting of the agricultural society. He mentally noted it, to use on the first public opportunity.

"Therefore I give my free and willing consent to my son Walter to marry Christina, and I shall take an early occasion to salute my daughter-in-law."

Walter could scarcely believe his ears, and his throat was so full of happiness that he could not speak immediately. He hastily crossed the room and seized his father's hand, saying huskily—

"Thank you."

"I did not expect this," muttered Dan, as if he were inclined to be sorry; "how's ever, I'm glad that it is so, since the lass wants it."

"You are surprised," said Dalmahoy, gratified by the impression he had made, "but you will observe that in consenting to this marriage I am only carrying out the principles which have guided my public life. It is long since I first raised my voice against class distinctions; and I am proud to find that the growing power and intelligence of the working classes are compelling universal acceptance of my doctrines. I am proud to think, sir, that we are approaching the era when intellect alone shall distinguish one man from another." (Another sentence to remember for his first speech.)

"Nae doubt, nae doubt," muttered Dan, neither understanding nor caring about the Laird's principles; "I'll say good day now."

"Before you go, Thorston, you understand, I hope, that Walter has nothing but his profession to depend upon at present; and even when my time comes he will have little more to expect than the house and a bit of land. I have a large family; we have no entail; and I mean to make my children equal as far as possible in what is left to them."

"You could not do better, sir; that's fair. Teenie will have some siller of her own. At any rate, she'll no bring her man an Inverness tocher."

Dan grinned at his little joke. According to one version of the saying, a man is supposed to get an Inverness tocher when he receives with his wife a mother-in-law, a sister-in-law, and a piano to keep.

The business being thus settled to everybody's satisfaction, as it seemed, and very much to the surprise of one of the persons interested, Thorston made his way home, taking a good look at the house and grounds as he passed out, although he had often seen both before. He was glad and sorry; he was eager to get home with the news, and yet inclined to loiter.

He felt very queer ; could not make it out ; maybe it was some ailment coming on him. He could not tell, for he had never known sickness in his own person. He wished young Dalma-hoy had been at Jericho, or that Teenie had been still a wee bairn, scampering about in short coats and bare legs.

Walter remained, and tried again to express his very warm gratitude to the Laird for thus readily removing the only obstacle to his perfect happiness.

"I hope you'll find it perfect, Wattie," said the father smiling ; "you'll be the first man who ever did. Prove your gratitude to me ten years hence, by telling me that you do not blame me for what I have done now."

"I'll do that !" cried the lover eagerly.

"Aye, be sure of this—I thought it was for your good to say yes, or I would have said no, just as readily. How the devil you are to get on with Dan Thorston as your father-in-law I can't see, unless you bribe him to emigrate to the Cannibal Islands or the North Pole ! A good idea ! Start an expedition to discover the North-west Passage, and make him captain. He'll never come back. The captain never does."

Walter laughed.

"There will be no need for that ; everybody likes Dan, and he's a fine honest fellow, as you yourself said."

"Yes, but I wasn't going to be his son-in-law. Honesty is admirable—in the abstract—but culture and manners are much more comfortable companions on a long journey."

"I am content—more than content. I am very happy."

"I dare say ; we all think that in the first heat of life. Oh, I know what the glamour of Love's young dream is, and upon my soul I don't think I would have opposed your wishes very savagely, even if there had not been good reasons known to myself for yielding to them. But, my lad, if you want to succeed in life, doubt everything and everybody except yourself. Remember that, and success is sure."

"You say that," said Walter—awkwardly, for he could not preach to his father—"and yet, has your life been all that you would have desired it to be ?"

The Laird winced ; his brow contracted, and he looked hard at the window. His memory flashed over the past, and he saw

many hopes baffled, many aspirations thwarted, many fine calculations upset, and many desires never gratified.

"No," he said, blowing his nose to conceal something like a sigh, for the retrospect was not a pleasant one—as whose is? He saw so much that might have been accomplished if only this or that had happened, and so much that had been accomplished which might have been left alone—"No; my life has been a failure. But I did not start with the experience which I offer to you."

"Don't you think, sir, that every man must work out his own experience?"

"It may be so, but there is so much wisdom in the experience of our fathers, that we would be happier if we would only be content to walk in their old-fashioned ways instead of striving after fantastic novelties in business, politics, and art. I have heard Whately say that the proverb 'Experience teaches fools' is a lie, for he is a wise man who profits by his own experience, a wiser still who profits by the experience of others; but a fool profits neither by his own nor others' experience. We shall see by-and-by in which category you stand."

"I hope it may not be the last."

"But it is the most probable place for you. Now go and amuse our friends until I join you. They are quite interesting. You will find them smiling on one side the face, and grinning in bitterness and spite on the other. This Methven property seems to have set the whole county by the ears."

Walter being unspeakably happy, and utterly indifferent to the Methven property, could afford to make a smiling effort to modify the rancour of his cousins, uncles, and aunts, although he would have much preferred walking off to Teenie at once.

The Laird retired to his private room, a small corner apartment, where he was rarely interrupted. Two sides of the chamber were covered with books, many of them Parliamentary, now seldom disturbed.

He sat down in his easy chair in front of his writing-table, and took out the letter which had occupied so much of his attention during the early part of his interview with Dan Thorston and Walter. He read it again, as if to reassure himself as to the nature of the contents,

"GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH.

"SIR,—We have made the necessary investigation into the affairs of the late George Methven, some time of Rowanden and Kingshaven, and latterly of Manchester. The result of that investigation is as follows :

"The said George Methven being a natural son, and dying without a will, the whole of his estate passes to the Crown ; but the nearest of kin on the mother's side may petition Her Majesty, through the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer of Exchequer, for a gift of the estate. As a rule this prayer is granted, subject to certain fees.

"We may mention that the members of the father's family are, in such a case as the present, devoid of right or power to make a claim, the members of the mother's family only being considered.

"So far as we have been able to discover, the nearest existing relative to the late George Methven is one Christina Thorston, daughter of Daniel Thorston, fisherman, now or recently residing at Rowanden. Daniel Thorston espoused a sister of George Methven's mother, and Christina Thorston is therefore full cousin of the deceased, and according to our present belief, his direct heir. We believe that by prompt and decisive action she might obtain the whole or greater part of the estate, subject to the usual fees.

"We shall be happy to attend to any further instructions with which you may favour us, and meanwhile

"We are, Sir,

"Your most humble and obedient Servants,

"PATTERSON & GREIG, W.S."

"It is the most remarkable event in my experience," said the Laird to himself, a glow of satisfaction suffusing his countenance. "To think of that youth Wattie stumbling blindfold into a million, and I, who have assiduously courted fortune all my life, never knew what it was to be out of difficulty. But I never had the same chance ; and Wattie won't forget his poor father when he is rich."

He wrote an answer to the lawyer's letter, and then locked it up in his strong box.

"We must keep this quiet until our arrangements are completed ; it would be a shame to disturb the contented minds of the girl and her father until I am quite sure of her claim. Now I can go and condole with our friends, and advise them not to be fools—if they can help it."

So, having arranged his plans—of which Walter was to know nothing either, for he was such a droll that he would reveal everything at once to Thorston—the Laird proceeded to join the ladies and gentlemen in the drawing-room, who were busy disputing their respective titles to the wealth of the dead man whom, living, they had snubbed and shunned.

CHAPTER VIII.

"GOING TO BE MARRIED."

NEXT morning, Dan was out on the headland before day-break. It was a calm morning, only a ripple upon the water, whilst the bay was like a sheet of glass. There was just a mysterious breathing of the atmosphere which mingled with the soft pulsations of the sea. The slightest sound was heard with singular distinctness. He saw the sun creep slowly up the horizon, darting many golden bars athwart the quivering breast of the sea.

The stillness was pathetic ; presently it was broken by the mellow chant of some fishermen singing in the distance, and looking round the point he saw the fishing fleet, in a straggling line, with brown sails flapping lazily in the gentle breeze, stealing slowly towards the haven. Then came the indistinct cur-r-eck of grouse, the screech of the heron on the rocks, the croak of gulls floating over the water, and the sharp twitter of lapwings as they rose in flight. The soft spiritual light of the morning, the waters flashing with all the colours of the rainbow, and the fishers' song combined to soothe Dan into a more contented mood than he had known since yesterday.

If the fishers of Rowanden had watched the skipper this morning, not one of them would have expected luck to the nets ; for his hand was often up at his brow, as he peered into space—farther than usual, for he was trying to see the future when there would be a solitary old man and a desolate cottage on the Norlan'. He stalked about with uncertain, dissatisfied steps. Then he would halt a long while in one place, calling himself hard names for not being proud and pleased as Teenie was when he told her of his expedition, and the result.

She clapped her hands, and cried, "That's fine !" And old Ailie chimed in with "It's grand news ; I aye said Teenie was born to be a lady." But neither thought of asking what he had to say.

He became dour, and would not speak.

Teenie saw this, and bade Ailie "whisht," subduing her own expressions of pleasure at the same time. After supper—Dan's appetite was still excellent—she made him a big tumblerful of steaming toddy, and he felt better. She got out the cards; they played, he won, and felt better still. The dark grim face of the man, the bright fair face of the girl bent over the table, and the feeble light of the oil-lamp flickered upon them, showing an expression of eagerness on the one, and simple joy on the other.

Ailie sat in the corner knitting, and retailing all the gossip she had picked up in the course of her morning's excursion. Buckie Ker's boat got adrift, and was found "dung a' to bits" on the rocks; Shauchlin (Shuffling) Sandy's wife was laid up with a very bad fever; Hirpling Jamie had quarrelled with the fish-dealer about the number of crans of herring they had got in the last "shot;" Louping Bob had got into trouble with the water-bailies, and his wife had been drinking "sare;" and so on, giving to each person mentioned the distinguishing to-name or nick-name, which was generally suggestive of some physical characteristic or ability. All this amused the skipper whilst his attention was fixed on the game.

Then Teenie sang to him her favourite ballad, the "Lass of Lochryan," and after, "Willie's drowned in Gamery." Her sweet voice made the plaintive story of the weary wanderings across the sea of fair Annie of Lochryan a real event to Dan, and he spoke of the heroine's fate as if he had known and loved her. The gloomy legend of the two lovers drowned in Gamery filled him with anger at the hard-hearted parent whose curse had been the cause of the trouble.

Dan went to bed happy; Teenie went to bed full of confused thoughts and visions. She was changed somehow, and all the world was changed. She was not the same Teenie who had been feeding the doos, threatening the cat, and studying the Book of Fate, half in fun and half in earnest, early that day. She was going to be married! It was all settled, and she was thrilling with the strange exultation, pleasure, and wonder which a girl experiences in the first few hours after her lover has spoken, and she has pledged herself to him. She could not possibly sleep this night, with that minister with the invisible head, the misty crowd of people, the beautiful bride's

cake—which she had seen a few days ago in the confectioner's window at Kingshaven—the old shoes, and the yellow carriage with the two white horses from the King's Arms, all dancing wild reels at the foot of the bed. There she was, in the carriage now, Walter beside her—the horses going off at a gallop down the brae, driving into the great mystery of the future.

She closes her eyes, covers her head with the clothes, and tries to shut it all out. But that is worse than ever. She gets up, goes to the window, and looks out. The sky is pale, and mottled with slow-moving clouds; the sea is rolling inward from the darkness, and breaking with long measured sweeps upon the rocks; the lights of the White Tower, high up in the air, are glinting their warning across the waters; below are the black spots which she knows to be the fishing-boats, and Rowanden looks like a black irregular mass of rocks pressing back from the shore. She felt calmer, looking out at these things, listening to the sea, and the eerie sough of the wind.

Stepping back from the window, she moved a chair, and presently there was a tap on the wooden partition which separated her bed from Ailie's in the next room. The sharp voice of the old woman cried—

"Goodness be here! lassie, ha'e you got the dwams, or what, that you're no bedded? There'll be nae word o' this in the morning" (meaning that she would be sorry for missing her rest).

That had more effect than anything else in composing Teenie's mind. She crept back to bed, surrendered herself to the exciting visions which she could not control, and by-and-by she slept.

The very happiness of the evening made Dan's waking thoughts the sadder, so he was up and out early. He ought to be proud of the position his lass was to fill; and he was proud in a manner, for all Rowanden would be "in a way" about it, and he would be looked up to more than ever. But he would have been quite contented if things could have gone on in the old way; and he had an uneasy suspicion that things would not be so comfortable either for Teenie or himself in the new way. There was the boat she had so often sailed with him; there were the nets her nimble fingers had so often helped him to mend; there was the hut which she had helped him to build

—by carrying the nails for him in her “daidly” (pinafore). He did not see how he was to get on without her at all. Only she wished it—and that was the one unanswerable argument.

“I’ll awa’ to Greenland with the next whaler,” he muttered, “and just think that she’s waiting for me at home here as in the auld times.”

A hand touched his arm, and he found Teenie beside him, looking as bright and fresh as if she had known no unrest during the night. She was a part of the morning, with her thick fair hair, her grand blue eyes, and sweet face.

“Weel?” said Dan, delighted by her presence, but not displaying the least sign of pleasure—“You’re early afoot.”

“You’ll no guess what I’ve been thinking?” she replied, looking at him with such a cunning smile.

“No; what might that be?”

“I’m no to marry Wattie Burnett!”

“What?” and he stared at her to see if she were quite herself.

Lips close, and expression serious; she nodded her head emphatically.

“Toots! you’re raving, lassie, or you’re trying to make fun of me. You maun marry him.”

And Dan exhausted all his arguments to show her how there was no escape from the compact now that it was made. He discovered ever so many reasons, of which he had not thought before, for considering the marriage in every way a fortunate and desirable one. At that she smiled, and said with wonderful resignation—

“Very well, father, since you say I must, I will.”

He felt hurt, for he saw that she had been laughing at him all the time; and he was relapsing into dourness, but she placed her hand on his shoulder and said, quite earnestly this time—

“But I would not have him if you said no, father—no, though he was King of England, and no another man for me in the world.”

It mollified him to hear her say so, and from that moment Thorston appeared to be the proudest and the most contented man in the world; whatever his secret thoughts or feelings might be, he looked always satisfied. It was a clever trick of hers, if it were only a trick.

Soon after breakfast Walter drove up in a gig, leapt down, and called for Teenie. He took both her hands; the man's eyes were full of the love that was in his heart. Teenie smiled, and for the first time felt shy with him.

"You know that it's all right? The Laird never said a word against our wishes, but was as kind as if I had just done what he wanted."

"Father told us last night—the Laird is very good."

"I wanted to come down myself last night, but I was kept late at the house—I must tell you the fun we had another time—and then I went over to Craighburn."

"To Miss Wishart—'deed and you might have come here instead," cried Teenie, laughing and pretending to be offended.

"I could not help that—it was due to her who has been so good to me. But get on your things; I've brought the gig, and I want you to go with me for a drive."

She was not quite prepared for that; it would be the first time they had driven out together, and it would be like an open declaration to all the country of their new relationship. However, he insisted, and she was not obstinate. So she went to her room to prepare for the journey—an operation simple enough and speedily effected, for it chiefly consisted of removing her apron, and putting on a straw hat and a shawl.

As Dan saw them drive off, he began to feel really proud and contented. Ailie was at his elbow to add her approval.

"Eh, but they're a braw pair, and it's a wonderful match for Teenie—though no so great when a's done, for the Laird hasna muckle to gi'e them. But they're a braw pair, and I felt in my heart to cast a bauchle after them even now."

Ailie was as blithe about the match as if she herself had been the bride.

Dan went down to the shore to see about the result of the last night's fishing, in which he had considerable interest, having this year taken a larger share than usual in the herring trade.

Walter made the horse go at a grand pace; the earth was too dull for him; he felt that he would have liked to fly. Rocks, trees, and water glanced by them; the keen air bit their cheeks, refreshing and exhilarating them; the clear sky seemed to smile upon them. They crossed the moorland, and

the way seemed short for both. He told her about that meeting at Dalmahoy on the previous day ; of the discussion about the Methven property ; of the ridiculous claims which were advanced to a share in it, and of the petty squabbles that were arising out of it. They laughed mightily at all that—money was such a small thing in the account of happiness to them.

Then he spoke about the coming days when they would be settled at Drumliemount, and the countless occupations they were to have ; the earnest work there was for them to do, and the joy they would have in doing it.

To all this Teenie listened, smiling approval, but saying little, because she did not know what to say other than "Yes" to every suggestion he made.

Suddenly, as they were drawing near the foot of the hills, she asked—

"Where are you going?"

"To Craighburn."

There was a little start and a flush on Teenie's cheek, as she hastily put her hand on the reins.

"I don't want to go there—any way, not yet."

He looked at her in surprise.

"But Grace wants to see you, so much, and to speak to you."

"I don't like to go there yet."

She felt awkward, and unable to define to herself, much less to him the source of her objection.

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"But to please me?"

A pause, during which he began to draw rein.

"Very well, if you want me to go, I'll go."

He gave the horse head again, and they went on, but he was not quite so buoyant as he had been at the beginning of the journey.

CHAPTER IX.

AT CRAIGBURN.

THEY drove into a bosky glen, the hills rolling upward on either side, purple with heather, so that Teenie felt as if she were in the hollow between two great waves at sea. They crossed a little grey stone bridge with low parapets, beneath which a burn, that came glancing and waving like a silver ribbon down from the hills, ran singing a merry song; they entered at a large wooden gate, and drove up to a white house which was hidden from the roadway by trees.

Grace was on the lawn, a broad-brimmed white-and-black ("pepper-and-salt," boys called it) straw hat on her head, with long black ribbons hanging loose. As soon as she heard the wheels, she hurried to the entrance to receive her visitors. Walter was already on the doorstep, helping Teenie to descend. She jumped down, and at that minute Grace caught the girl in her arms and kissed her.

Teenie was taken by surprise; she was unaccustomed to such warmth of salutation, and so she shrank back a little, her head drooping shyly.

Curious that this girl who could remain unmoved in the midst of a storm, who had never shrunk from the gaze of man or woman, should suddenly feel awkward and shy in the presence of one who had proved herself a true friend.

"I am glad to see you here, Teenie, and very pleased," said Grace, in a low sweet voice; and Teenie immediately felt ashamed of the attempt she had made on the road to delay the visit.

"I would have been over at the Norlan' myself, if you had not come," Grace went on with simple earnestness, "for I wanted so much to see you, and to wish you a joyful future—as I am sure it will be."

"Thank you," was all Teenie could say, for she still felt strange and awkward.

She had often before met Grace, and had been always happy with her. But then they had met on the shore, amongst the boats and the nets, where Teenie was quite at home ; and then they had met before Walter had told her his story. Now the whole world seemed to have changed and become strange to her, and all its people different from what they used to be.

"But come away and get your shawl off, and then we'll send Walter about his business, to smoke or to read, or to do what he likes, and we'll have a nice long chat all to ourselves," said Grace, with her pleasant smile, leading the way into the house.

Teenie looked anxiously at Walter, as if she would ask him not to leave her ; but he was busy giving some directions to the ostler, and did not observe her. So there was nothing for her to do but to follow Grace.

There are faces—mere faces—which *flash* upon you and electrify you. They strike you in the street, on a country road, in the house, in the theatre, or in a railway carriage : only one glimpse, one bright look, and you are spellbound—ready to follow that face wherever it may lead you, to good or ill. This kind of electrical face accounts for many wild, incongruous, and insane acts of men. Women are sometimes, but comparatively rarely, subject to a similar influence.

Such a face was Grace Wishart's.

A naturally pale complexion, looking paler by contrast with her dark hair ; eyes large and deep brown, almost black ; features singularly regular, but somewhat pinched, as if by much suffering. A sad face ; but when she smiled all sense of sadness disappeared, the very faults of the face became attractions, for features and eyes glowed with intense sympathy.

Figure, small and delicate, but endowed with a spirit which gave almost unnatural activity to her slight frame. The figure would have been perfect but for the right shoulder, which was deformed—slightly, but sufficiently so to be a distinct scar upon her beauty, and to be the subject of the nick-names and jests of children, and foolish or cruel men.

She had suffered terribly when a child, on account of this physical misfortune ; she had been often so severely tried, that she had felt and wished to be wicked in order to punish her tormentors. But she had grown up good and gentle ; the

ready helper of all who suffered ; the comforter and adviser of those who staggered under the blows of fortune. Her income, small though it was, enabled her to relieve the pressing wants of poverty ; but her own good-nature did far more than money to soothe and relieve troubled hearts.

"Miss Grace" became a name to be loved and revered throughout the country. Wherever sickness showed itself, she was there to help and comfort ; wherever sorrow had laid its heavy hand, her voice and presence brought speedy relief. Wherever her steps passed, she left a trace behind her, bright as a moon's path on a calm sea.

"She's Grace by name, and grace by nature," said Todd the miller, who was not given to sing the praises of womankind generally.

Her father died when she was very young ; her mother, a sister of Dalmahoy's, and by many years his senior, was almost a constant invalid, and severely tasked her daughter's time and patience.

But Mrs. Wishart, who had married late in life, and had been blessed with only the one child, had no idea of her own infirmity. When getting into bed on one occasion (she was close upon seventy then) she felt some twinges of rheumatism.

"Eh, Grace," she cried, "if the Lord be pleased to spare me to grow old, what's to become of me, if I have the rheumatics now ?"

From a very early age the entire management of Craighburn had devolved upon Grace. She had known much bitterness in childhood, she had known nothing of the pleasures of girlhood, and the necessity to think and act for herself and others from youth onward made her feel quite old whilst in years she was quite young.

This was the lady at whose embrace Teenie felt shy.

Leading her up-stairs, she spoke to her in a quiet pleasant way about her father and his affairs, about Ailie, and the doos — about everything she thought could interest her. But still the girl was awkward and could not feel at ease. Then Grace spoke of her mother, and how she was always expecting to be up and doing as briskly as in the far-back days before she had married ; of the folk at Rowanden, and the various ailments from which they suffered ; of the farmers roundabout, and their people.

Teenie answered in short uncomfortable sentences, which supplied no impetus to the conversation. Grace was very patient, and would take nothing amiss; indeed, she knew that it would have been wrong to do so, for she had an instinctive appreciation of all the difficulty Teenie experienced in speaking to her, and she was doing her best to remove it. She knew that Teenie was aware of all that had passed between herself and Walter.

She helped Teenie—much against that young lady's will—to take off her shawl, and then she looked at her with honest admiration: the lithe shapely form, the rich fair hair, and the bright fresh face, looking all the more beautiful under its present expression of shyness that was almost timidity.

"Ah! I never thought you were so bonnie, Teenie, until now," exclaimed Grace, sincerely proud of her, although she could not help a faint regretful remembrance of her own misfortune in presence of this perfect embodiment of youth. "Walter has been lucky, and you will be a good wife to him."

"I'll try," said Teenie, wishing with all her heart that she could find something warmer and more expressive to say.

"I'm sure you will, and it was very kind of you to come to me and let me be the first to say 'God bless you and him,' as I do, very earnestly."

Teenie felt that she was receiving thanks which she did not deserve. She could not bear that, and she broke the spell which bound her tongue.

"You are no to thank me for coming," she said hurriedly; "it was his doing. I did not want to come—at least not yet. I thought—I felt——"

She stammered, stopped, afraid to say something that might give pain, and looked helplessly at Grace, whose calm face was a little paler than usual. She spoke tenderly, as if Teenie were the one who needed sympathy and not herself.

"Come and sit down here, Tennie" (placing her in a big old-fashioned arm-chair, and seating herself in a straight-backed high one); "I can talk to you better there. When you are standing you look so big and strong that I feel half afraid of you."

They both laughed at that, and they felt more companionable, that is, more equal than they had done yet. Grace proceeded—

"I am glad you have spoken so frankly, and I still thank you for coming, for I know that you are glad you came, now you find it gives me pleasure."

"Yes, very glad."

"Well, I want to speak to you very seriously, and I would never have been able to do so if you had not spoken out just now. Walter has told you what has passed between us; I am very fond of him, and always will be. He is true and earnest; I want him to be happy, and just because I am fond of him I want him to marry you, because that will make him happy; and I want you to think of me and love me as the dear sister of both, for I shall always love you both very much. Do you think you can do that?"

Teenie looked at her, wide-eyed, wondering—never doubting her, but wondering how she could say in one breath that she loved the man, and yet that she was content he should marry somebody else. She would not have felt so, and therefore, of course, could not have said it. What was the difference between them, then? Was there not something very bad in her, that she did not feel like Grace? Was there not something very wicked in her, that she did not feel more acutely sorry than she did for the pain Grace must be suffering? She could not tell, but she felt almost inclined to envy Grace the power of making this sacrifice.

From her babyhood, in trifles and in serious matters, Teenie had always shown a restless desire to be equal to everything and everybody. She had never seen any of the fishermen perform a feat which she did not attempt, and attempt again, until she could do it as well as, or better than, her example.

"I wish I could tell you what I'm thinking," she cried distressedly; "I wish he had never seen me, for he ought to have married you; he would have been far happier than he can ever be with me."

And she stared vacantly at the window, as if seeking in space some means of altering the arrangement yet.

"Hush, Teenie! you must not speak that way. Think how much he cares for you before he would have—altered his plans."

She was going to say, "Before he would have sought my leave to break off his engagement with me," but she stopped in time.

"I wish I could be like you, Miss Wishart," said Teenie, with such a plaintive look, full of such a pitiful sense of her own failings, that Grace's whole heart was drawn towards her.

"You must call me Grace, and you must not wish to be anybody but yourself—for it's Teenie he wants, and nobody else."

"Aye, but I begin to feel there are so many things I am stupid and ignorant about, that——"

Grace would not allow her to finish.

"You are a brave, bonnie lass, and we are all fond of you, and that's everything. Even the laird said he admired you, and gave his consent at once, when we were expecting a fine to-do. Now I am your sister, am I not?"

Teenie's face brightened, and the two girls clasped hands as she replied in her fearless, honest way——

"Yes."

"And you will always like me and believe in me?"

"I cannot help doing that."

"Very well, it's a bargain, mind you, and I will hold you to it." Grace, smiling, held up her finger in a mock threatening way. "Remember, I am your elder sister, with great experience of the world, and I shall be very severe if you ever dare to say another word against Teenie. I won't be afraid of you, although you are ever so much bigger and bonnier than me."

Teenie was amused, and all her shyness disappeared—the affectionate nature of Grace had entirely overcome it. They laughed together, and there was no longer any hesitation between them.

They went out to the garden, exchanging confidences about the management of pigeons and bees, about flowers and cooking. Teenie explained that the proper way to cook a yellow haddock was to toast only one side—the skinny side—so that all the juice might be preserved in the other. Love and cookery supplied delightful subjects of conversation.

They sat down on a green knoll, backed by rose-bushes and the bee-hives, Grace a little below her "big sister," as she called Teenie, so that she might look up and admire her, which she was never tired of doing.

Walter appeared in the distance, smoking ; he saw the two, and halted, a glad smile on his face. Suddenly he hastened into the house, and reappeared with Grace's painting paraphernalia.

"Sit there," he cried gaily. "I want to make a sketch of you two—it will be something by which to remember this day."

He sketched, they all chatted, and they were very happy. The song of birds, the hum of the bees, and the perfume of flowers around them contributed to their pleasure. Beyond the garden was a field of ripe barley, its long beards drooping gracefully under the weight of its own rich burden, showing what the farmers like to see, "fine sweiye (swayed) heads." They were like ladies' fingers stretched towards something they feared to touch, yet trembling in their eagerness to reach it. Then the wind swept over the yellow mass, and it rolled and murmured like the wavelets of a loch.

Grace declared that the sketch flattered her far too much, and did not make Teenie half so handsome as she really was ; but Teenie thought it was quite the other way, and that lady sitting there was much too nice for her. So there was a pretty dispute between them. Walter said he would keep the daub himself since they were not satisfied with it, but he thought it wasn't bad.

They enjoyed his pretended vanity ; and the lovers drove away from Craighburn.

Grace watched them till they had passed the gate and were hidden from her by the trees.

"They will be very happy," she thought, "and I am glad."

She went quietly about the ordinary affairs of the household, just as if there were no pain at her heart, just as if she were not trying with all her might to close eyes, ears, and mind to the wild cry that was swelling her breast.

"They will be very happy," she kept on saying to herself, as if the words were a charm to protect her from bitter thoughts, "and I am glad."

She waited upon her mother, who was a prisoner in a big arm-chair that was like a sentry-box with the top off, and who was always fretting that the days passed and she was not yet able to walk over to Dalmahoy to see her brother as she used

to do. He was sure to be getting into some mischief ; he always did when she was long away from him ; he was such a young, hair-brained youth !

Grace was gentle, patient as ever, and promised that they should drive over some day soon to see the Laird.

"Toots, drive ! Can I no walk as I used to do ?" was the impatient cry of the old lady.

But at last Grace went to her own room and sat down to think.

It was indeed a heavy hand that was laid upon her. From her earliest childhood she had striven to do what was right, and yet it seemed as if the more she strove the heavier became the cross she bore. Why was it that she should suffer thus, and why should these bitter thoughts come now ? Because of Walter ? Well, why should he leave her ? She was older, but not much ; she was not so very hideous, and she loved him very dearly.

She looked up almost wildly. The glass was before her—the beautiful face, and the shoulder which seemed to make a mockery of her beauty.

She shrank downward, covering her face.

But they would be very happy, and she was glad !

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CHAPTER X.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

THE result of the excursion to Craighburn was a source of intense joy to Walter Burnett. He had determined upon the visit after much hesitation, for naturally under the circumstances he had feared that the interview might prove unpleasant to all parties. But Grace and Teenie were friends. He did not think he could have been happy otherwise. He was not vain enough to think that Grace would suffer very much on his account, but he knew that she must experience disappointment and annoyance when the fact came to be known to their friends that her marriage was definitively broken off, and that he was about to marry Thorston's daughter.

He believed that what he had done was right; and, with good reason, he thought of Grace with deep and tender admiration for her generous readiness to release him from an engagement which, although not made by himself, he had acquiesced in by his silence. But he could not avoid an uneasy feeling that he had been unkind to her; at moments he was troubled by a suspicion that it would have been truer and braver to have closed up in his own breast for ever this love to which he had yielded, and without a word to have fulfilled his engagement. But would that have been honest to her—to have made her his wife whilst his tenderest and best thoughts were with another? No, that could not have been just to her. Then he looked at Teenie, and he felt so full of joy that he could see no further. One is stupid when very happy; we need the sting of sorrow to make us wise.

Although Teenie was somewhat silent on the way home, he knew that she was pleased; and he obtained from her the admission that she was glad she had yielded to his persuasion and gone to Craighburn—Miss Wishart had been so good and kind to her. That Grace would be so, he had never doubted;

but it made him the happier to know that Teenie was sensible of it.

"Aye," he said, playfully making the whip crack over the horse's head; "the highest reputation a man's talents may win for him is nothing compared to the affection which simple goodness will attain. But it requires genius to be good."

He laughed at this sententiousness; but he was earnest enough, nevertheless. He was thinking of his own aims, and half conscious of weakness in himself which threatened to mar all that he hoped to do.

Teenie looked at him, wondering how it was that he could have turned away from Grace Wishart for her sake. For a minute her face was darkened by a doubt that they were making a blunder somehow, for which they might suffer sadly by-and-by. But his dauntless enthusiastic love and her own affection dispelled the cloud immediately.

It was all so strange, driving along in the bright sunshine with him, knowing that they belonged to each other now, and that they were to go on this way side by side through life—he holding the reins, of course, just as he was doing now, occasionally touching her hand with tender warmth, glancing with fond smiles in her face, and even (in some very quiet parts) stealing an arm round her waist, giving her a hug and a kiss in defiance of all decorum.

She felt more and more impressed by the sense that she was not the same as yesterday; but she could not understand what was the nature of the mysterious change which had taken place during the night. She hesitated about what she was going to say; she hesitated about her movements in a way that she had never done before, and for which she could find no satisfactory reason. She used to speak out whatever thought came uppermost; now she regarded him first with a quick timorous glance, as if seeking his approval.

It was a fairy story, or a dream, and it was very sweet. Here was the prince (he was the Laird's son, and the Laird was a man of importance in her eyes) come to take the simple daughter of the fisherman away to a grand castle; and she was to be decked out in silks and braids of the rarest; many servants were to wait upon her; horses and chariots were to be at her command; and barges glittering with golden masts

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and silver sails were to convey her across the seas whither she willed to go. It was very beautiful. She knew of such things in ballads and legends; but who could have thought that she was to become the heroine of such a romance? It was almost too good to be true.

Dan came home to dinner, and feasted rarely upon prime corned beef—fishermen as a rule have a preference for "fleshers" meat—turnips and potatoes. Walter feasted too, and remained t'e whole afternoon. Dan found himself in the way; he grumbled, and kept as much out of sight as possible.

In the moonlight the lovers were still together, walking upon the headland. They halted beside a clump of scraggy trees—the moorland reaching towards the hills behind them, the sea radiant with silver streams before them.

The shadows of the branches formed exquisite lacework at their feet; they stood in a fairy circle of delicate tracery—involvement and uncertain in its forms as their own future; changing with every breath of wind, but beautiful as their hopes.

Her life had been a happy one, brightened by many homely joys and little adventures along the shore; her will in all things unconstrained. But there had been long monotonous stretches in it, too, where the bare moorland looked dull and bleak, and her limbs thrilled with energies for which there was no outlet. Then the restless spirit of the sea seemed to possess her, and she hungered to see and to know the something which lay beyond the encircling horizon.

Curiosity almost as much as affection made her think eagerly, yet with a strange timidity, of her marriage-day. She dreamt of new scenes, new duties, and a purpose in life that would fill her mind and occupy her restless hands; to Walter she would be indebted for all this, and to him she owed much of the inspiration of her vague imaginings. She was very proud of him and grateful to him.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ORDEAL.

THE Laird rode over to the Norlan' Head, next forenoon, trim, brisk, and youthful.

He had received another letter from Edinburgh, confirming his fondest hopes, and he was in a blithe humour although he had quarrelled with several relatives and a number of friends, because he had assured them that they had no prospect of obtaining a penny from the Methven estate, and that he had good reason to believe he knew the heir, whilst he declined at that moment to make the intelligence public.

"You're jest a greedy old tyke, and I'm satisfied you mean to have something out of it for your own pouch," said Aunt Jane, his maiden sister, who lived in a little villa on the outskirts of Kingshaven, and on a moderate income maintained her position as one of "the gentry."

"Pon my soul, cousin, you force me to suspect you, since you will not deal openly with us," said the general—General Forbes, long retired on half-pay—"why should there be any secret in a family so united as ours, especially when our interests are in common?"

"But you'll tell us in confidence, Laird?" said Widow Smyllie, a smooth-faced handsome little lady, with a large family, and therefore anxious to increase her means.

The provost, Dubbieside, modestly advanced his claim to know the secret on the score of justice—as a magistrate he ought to know how the matter stood, in order to be able to advise others.

But the Laird was neither to be gibed, threatened, nor cajoled into a confession of his secret. He magnanimously overlooked all the disagreeable things which were said of himself, and delivered a patriotic oration on the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and assured them that his only interest

in the matter was to see that every one should have justice—that was, full satisfaction of all their claims.

Aunt Jane went off severely threatening that she would never darken his doors again.

The general swore that, if there was law in the land, he would punish the Laird for his attempted trickery.

The provost mildly declared that in his own behoof, and in behoof of others, he must enter a formal protest against the singular conduct of Dalmahoy.

Widow Smyllie playfully touched his arm, and with a coaxing look said in her smooth voice—

“But you’ll not forget the five fatherless bairns, Laird? You know what a struggle I have to put them forward in the world, and you won’t forget them if you have any influence in the matter.”

“But that is just what I have not, my dear, and these fools snap and snarl at me because they will not believe me. I have no power whatever, I can do nothing for anybody—not even for myself. It is entirely a matter of law, and I, having had some interest in the man, happened to make inquiries, which were answered in confidence. Without betraying that confidence, I wished to save you folk from wasting time and temper over a matter which I know cannot benefit any of you.”

“But you’ll try to get us a little?” pleaded the widow, smiling so sweetly, and not believing a word of what he said any more than the others.

“If you will show your relationship to Methven, on the mother’s side, I’ll do everything I can to help you. I can say no more.”

The widow did not even then think it a pleasant duty to hunt up her relationship with George Methven’s mother; but she smiled and thanked Dalmahoy as if he had done her the greatest kindness, and went away thinking that he was the most awful hypocrite she had ever come across.

The Laird did not care; he knew that he had spoken the absolute truth, and what he did not wish to make known he had frankly told them. He was a little irritated, perhaps, that they should be so inconsiderate and so indifferent to the true principles of action, either in public or private affairs; but then,

what could you expect from people who had given no attention to the policy of the nation !

So when he received the second letter from the lawyers, he rode over to the Norlan' Head in high "fettle."

Ailie saw him coming, and ran to warn Teenie, who was at that moment busy with the preliminary mysteries of kippering salmon.

"Guid be here, lassie!" cried Ailie, thrusting her away from the table, and snatching a large ashet out of her hands, "you shouldna fash wi' thae things now. You're going to be a leddy, and you maun learn no to soil your hands, least of all to gar them smell of fish. There's the Laird coming, I'se warrant to back-spear you, and examine you in your carritchers (catechism) maybe, and no a minute for you to change your gown."

Ailie's idea of the Laird's visit was that he intended to put his future daughter-in-law through an examination such as the children of the parish school were annually subjected to in his presence.

Teenie was not half so much discomposed as Ailie by the near approach of the ordeal she had to undergo—for it was an ordeal.

"Where's father?" she asked quietly.

"He's out—by some gate; but haste you, and put on your silk gown, and make yourself braw, or the Laird come."

Teenie with the utmost calmness washed her hands in a basin which stood on the dresser, but displayed no intention of leaving the kitchen.

Ailie halted midway in the floor, her hands full of the ashet, her eyes full of wonder and indignation.

"Is it possible that you mean to meet the Laird in that fashion?" she cried; "are you clean out of your judgment, or what's wrang with you? Gae 'wa this minute and put on your braws, or I'll think you're daft."

"Never you heed, Ailie," said Teenie doggedly; "if the Laird will not have me for his daughter this way, he'll no have me any other way."

"The Lord be merciful to us!" groaned Ailie; "the bairn has neither respect nor reason."

But she had taken one of her humours, and was not to be moved. She would not have changed her dress if Walter had

been coming—to be sure, she might have looked to see that her hair was in order—and why should she do it because his father came? “No; he should see her just as she was, and he could be pleased or not—just as he liked.

The Laird entered, followed by Dan.

The Laird was on his grand horse; he was younger than ever—he was more condescending than ever.

“Where is Christina?” he was saying, as he entered the kitchen; and seeing her, he advanced quite gallantly and kissed her, much to her discomfiture.

“I must salute my daughter,” he said gaily, and repeated the kiss as if he liked it; whilst she shrank back, bewildered and confused.

She had been prepared to meet him, but she had not been prepared for such a display of affection and respect.

“Why, now, this is charming,” he said, holding her hands and looking at her admiringly. “I see you have not been foolishly preparing to receive me in your Sabbath clothes. You have paid me the very highest compliment you could pay me, my dear lass; you have granted me common-sense enough to appreciate the lady, no matter what her attire might be; and believe me, I am proud of your confidence.”

Teenie felt herself quite put out of countenance by his compliments, and by his reference to a matter which only a minute ago had been the subject of a dispute between her and Ailie. But she felt somehow spiteful towards him that he should have thought of such a subject.

“I am glad you are pleased, sir,” she said, with a self-possession which was born of her vexation; “I did not know you were coming to-day, or I would have been better prepared to receive you.”

There was a degree of unconscious satire in the answer which amused Dalmahoy.

“Impossible that you could be better prepared than you are,” he said smiling. “I am proud to call you daughter; and I do not at all wonder, now that I look at you again, that Walter should have defied my wishes and sought you for his wife. I forgave his disobedience before I came here; now I admire it, and freely declare that with the same sweet temptation in my way I would have been disobedient myself.”

This was spoken with the air of a man who thought he deserved to be admired alike for his frankness and condescension.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," said Teenie, standing with hands clasped behind her, very much as she used to stand when repeating her lessons to the dominie.

Evidently she did not admire Dalmahoy, as he expected. He, intending to be most conciliatory and most kind, provoked in her a spirit of rebellion which threatened to make his visit anything but satisfactory to either party. Walter had sought her because he loved her, and she had accepted him for the same reason, not because he was the Laird's son. Dalmahoy's grand air and his patronage irritated her so that she could have no sympathetic communion with him. She could not say as she felt, and as she had said to Grace Wishart, she was very glad that Walter loved her, and that she wished to be a true wife to him in all ways. She was rather inclined to be spiteful and dry—as unlike herself as could be. No doubt this was partly due to the feverish excitement of her position.

Thorston stood near the door, hat in hand, his thick curly hair tangled in wild confusion, his hard weather-beaten face cold and apparently indifferent, whilst his eyes moved slowly from Teenie to the Laird, and back to her. Big and stolid, he had no more appreciation of Dalmahoy's condescension than his daughter had. Indeed, he had a dull notion that he would have been best pleased if the affair should go no further.

Ailie was the only one who seemed disposed to pay proper respect to his Lairdship. She had been fidgeting at the dresser, and at last she wheeled about with the suggestion—

"Will you no bid the Laird ben to the parlour?"

"No, thank you," said Dalmahoy, before anybody else could speak, and not feeling quite so much at his ease as he liked to feel, whilst Dan was glaring at him with his great dark eyes, just like those of a fish newly out of the water, he thought, and Teenie was so reserved, if not defiant; "no thank you, I like this homely place best. Nothing is more charming to me than simplicity of manners and life. I am delighted with nothing so much as the privilege of occasionally sharing the plain fare and the—the ordinary ways of my neighbours. Here, of course, I make myself quite at home."

He was taking advantage of one of the stereotyped phrases of his electioneering days, to get over what seemed to be an awkward pause.

"Ony way, you'll be seated, Laird," said Ailie, with her apron dusting a chair which was already as clean as scrubbing could make it.

"Permit me."

And the Laird advanced, bowing to Teenie, with as much courtesy as if she had been a real princess, and conducted her to the chair which had been offered to himself.

"Manners is everything," muttered Ailie to herself, as she thrust another chair forward for Dalmahoy, which he accepted with the most gracious "Thank you."

Teenie was fluttered and "put out" by all this. She submitted; she sat down; but she was even more rebellious the more polite he showed himself. The Laird, with all his courtesy, unfortunately did not possess the art—which is really born of unselfish good nature—of making people feel at ease.

"I come to you to-day," he said in his best manner, "simply to offer you my sincere congratulations on your approaching union with my son, and to wish you all the happiness which can befall man and wife. Allow me to say that what I have seen of you leads me to think that you will be a good wife to him, and I do hope that he will make you happy."

He was so very sincere that Teenie felt somewhat ashamed of the almost uncivil way in which she had treated him.

"Thank you," she said very heartily.

"But I have another subject on which I hope to be able to congratulate you and my son in a few days. I shall not explain myself now, because it might raise hopes which may be vain, and therefore for your sakes I say nothing more than that I expect you to be the happiest and the luckiest couple in all the county."

"We mean to try our best," she said, wondering what he could mean by this vague announcement.

"No doubt of it, and I shall be always proud to think that in my private, as in my public actions, I have proved myself indifferent to and incapable of class prejudices."

That was another grand utterance which she did not understand, but she supposed it meant something very kind, and so she thanked him again.

"Your father I have long respected," he went on, "yourself I have long esteemed—long before I had any suspicion that there was likely to be an alliance of our families" (if it had been a royal marriage he could not have spoken of it more grandly)—"and now that I see you, simple, gentle, and beautiful, I cannot doubt that my son's happiness will be safe in your keeping."

"I hope so, sir." (She began to feel dazed, and bewildered by this flow of words.)

"I trust you will soon learn to look upon me as your second father, whose affection, although it cannot be greater, is certainly not less profound than that of my good friend, Captain Thorston."

He called him "Captain" as if by some prerogative he conferred a special dignity upon Dan, which at once elevated him and displayed the magnanimity of the Laird.

Ailie was ready to lay down her life for him—he was "that grand and yet that free." Teenie was unable to reply, she was so overwhelmed by his kindness. Dan was silent and quite calm: he was utterly unappreciative, for in his eyes Teenie was all the world. If the Queen's son had come seeking her he would not have thought there was much out of the way in the proposal—when the object was his lass, who could manage a boat as well as the best fisher of Rowanden—aye, and manage the nets too, as well as make them.

He had just a confused notion that the Laird meant to be friendly and wished them well.

But when Dalmahoy again referred to the good news with which he intended to surprise them, and to the great fortune which might fall into Teenie's lap, he was puzzled, for he could not conceive how or whence any special fortune could come to them. The Laird playfully insisted upon his right to surprise them, and kissing Teenie again without permitting her to object, he took his leave—charmed, as he said, with his new daughter, and the prospect of his son.

Walter, in feverish anxiety to learn the result of the interview, and forbidden the house during it, by his father, was in the road waiting for somebody to appear with intelligence as to the progress of affairs.

He advanced to the side of his father's horse, with the eager question—

"Well—are you satisfied?"

"Delighted, Walter, delighted—she is a splendid creature, and I admire your taste more than ever," cried the Laird making his horse walk so that Walter might keep pace with him.

"You see, sir, she is not one of the fashionable kind of girls; she's not a woman of any particular talent—unless it be fishing," he added, laughing.

"Toots, man! I abhor your women of talent—did you ever see a modest one? I know that *you* will appreciate my sentiments when I say that I have a ridiculous fancy for old-fashioned virtues; I much prefer commonplace and modesty to genius and indelicacy. Of course I do not mean to deny the pleasures of a talented woman's society—it is charming for an hour or so. It is like drinking champagne; but you can't keep on drinking champagne without paying the penalty of a headache. A woman of talent who was modest and loved her home would be a goddess—but we mustn't look for goddesses off the stage."

"I can't tell you how glad I am that you are satisfied with her," said Walter, thrilling all over with joy.

"Satisfied!—I am charmed—delighted, I tell you; and by my faith you may be thankful that time is on your side, or I would have tried to cut you out even now."

Walter laughed and hastened back to the cottage.

The Laird nodded, touched his horse, and galloped home, all aglow with admiration of Teenie.

He found several letters awaiting him, and amongst them another from the lawyers in Edinburgh, which he opened with eagerness.

He seated himself in the big chair, before beginning to read, and leaned back with the air of a man who wishes to enjoy good news to the uttermost.

But, as his eyes glanced over the contents of the letter, he suddenly bent forward with a startled expression. He took off his glasses (the letter lying on his knees) and polished them with the silk handkerchief; put them on again, and steadied himself like a man who braces himself up to some unexpected and disagreeable encounter.

He read the letter again :—

“GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH.

“SIR, —We hasten to inform you that there seems to have been some error about the heirship of the Methven estate.”

“Then who the devil perpetrated the error, but yourselves ?” muttered the Laird.

“According to our information the heir was one Christina Thorston, daughter of the sister of the late George Methven’s mother ; but, from information just received, we are induced to believe that the said Christina Thorston’s mother was not the sister of Methven’s mother. If this information should prove to be correct, the Christina Thorston referred to in our former letter is not the heir to the Methven estate.”

“Then why did you say so ?” growled the Laird.

“We trust this may not have caused you any inconvenience, and can only express our regret that the information first received—which seemed to bear all the impress of truth—should have betrayed us into this error. We must beg of you to suspend any decision you may be inclined to come to on the subject, until the result of further inquiries is known.

“We are, sir, etc.,

“PATTERSON & GREIG, W.S.”

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD ADVICE.

DALMAHOY meditated, a blank look on his face, chin buried in his chest, and the letter dangling over his knee.

The result of his meditation was the honest admission—
“What a confounded fool I have been!”

The sweet visions of an unencumbered estate, of boundless financial resources which would have enabled him to develop the universal wealth of his land, and to prosecute successfully, various other speculations—certain to return millions, if only “capital” were forthcoming to work them—all melted into thin air, and he had committed himself to the union of his son with old Thorston’s daughter!—no longer Captain Thorston.

If he had been only a little more frank, Thorston might have set him right at once. If only his good nature had not betrayed him—as it so often did—into the desire to give them a pleasant surprise; if only he had not been tempted by the wish to appear before them all one fine morning in the character of a noble benefactor conferring untold wealth upon the humble child of his adoption—he had rehearsed the scene repeatedly in imagination—and receiving their amazed and grateful thanks, he might have avoided this scrape. Of course it was ridiculous to think of his son marrying a girl of Teenie’s position without some much stronger inducement than a mere fancy. But then he had given his consent, unconditionally and in the most formal fashion.

He summoned Peter Drysdale. The man had been, with only one brief interval, all his life in the service of Dalmahoy. The interval occurred when, tempted by the natural beauty of Canada, and the opportunity it offered to the poorest for making a fortune, as represented by a panorama exhibited in the village, he took his eldest son and made for the land of promise. On his arrival he saw a dismal uncultivated waste, and found

that life was as hard, and in some respects not quite so comfortable, there as at home. He was filled with despair as he looked at the land which had been allotted to him.

"Eh, man, Jock," he groaned to his son, "this is no the panoramyl!"

He hastened back to the old country, and was permitted to resume his former position at Dalmahoy. His son remained in Canada and prospered, so that Drysdale was sometimes disposed to lament his hasty return. He was one of those men who are doomed always to see the tide of fortune behind them.

When the door had been closed, the Laird spoke as if inspired by some trivial curiosity.

"You remember the woman Methven?"

"Fine; she was the mother of the lass that——"

"Just so, I know all that," interrupted Dalmahoy; "but she had a second daughter, much younger than the one you allude to—do you remember her?"

"Mistress Methven had half a dozen daughters, at least—some of them living yet, and as decent women as you could find," answered Drysdale in his melancholy tone. "What was the name of the one you mean?"

"I don't know—but she married Thorston."

"Oh—her? She wasna a Methven ava, but just a neighbour's lass that the wife Methven got to take care of—that is, if you mean Jeanie Kerr, who was Skipper Thorston's guidwife."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Perfect sure—everybody ken'd it, though she was married out of the auld wifie Methven's house."

There if he had only taken the least trouble to investigate details, he would not have required to cross his own doorstep in order to discover the real position of affairs. But the Laird never could attend to trifles; his mind was far too much engaged with grand results to bother about details; and somehow these confounded details were always interfering with the most brilliant calculations of his fertile brain.

There could be no longer any doubt about it—the lawyers had blundered; and he had blundered in the most reprehensible way, because the most ridiculous, seeing that the information necessary to set him right had been all the time within hand's reach.

He dismissed Drysdale and then he heartily cursed his own stupidity and his own blindness. Why had he not looked into the matter a little more closely? Why had Walter come to him just at the moment when he was most ready to believe what he wished to believe was the case? Confound them all! they had led him into a pretty mess, and he could not see any satisfactory way out of it, with all his experience of political manœuvring.

Enter Walter, face flushed and eyes bright with pleasure. He had been walking at a great pace, keeping time with the merry whirl of his thoughts.

"We have settled it," he said briskly.

"Settled what, sir?"

"The day of the marriage—there's no use putting off time, so we have fixed this day month. By that time we can have the cottage at Drumliemount quite ready, and I shall begin work at once. We are to have everything as quiet as possible, and we go straight to our own home. Of course the marriage will take place at the Norlan' Head."

"Of course her marriage should, under the patronage of the fisher colony, and with a savoury smell of fine fresh herring prevailing."

Walter stared at his father, who sat looking at him over his glasses. The tone and the manner were so peculiar, and were so different from those he had used in the morning. Walter gave a short uneasy laugh.

"I like fresh herring," he said lightly; "and I am glad you do not wish to have the marriage here, for Thorston would never have consented to that. He would have taken the proposal as a kind of insult, and it would have displayed a prejudice—"

"Displayed a fiddlestick," interrupted the Laird restlessly, for he had not yet made up his mind how to declare his changed purpose.

He got up, crossed the room two or three times, then he halted, and, in his best Parliamentary style, addressed his son—playing with his glasses all the while.

"Prejudice is a characteristic of weak minds; I have none. I am practical; consequently I am occasionally disagreeable. Every man who is worth his salt is occasionally disagreeable.

Every man who has any right to claim individuality of character, finds it occasionally necessary to change his opinions and views of things political and things social. I find it necessary to change my views."

"In regard to what, sir?" asked Walter, a good deal bewildered by his father's grandiloquence, and quite unsuspicious of the end towards which he was driving.

But that brought him to the point too abruptly. The Laird disliked to give pain, because the sufferer bothered him.

"You are too fast, Walter—you leap to conclusions without arguing them out thoroughly; and unfortunately you act upon these rash conclusions, thereby causing yourself and others a great deal of useless trouble."

"I really cannot discover what you refer to, sir. Have I been bungling in anything lately?"

"Indeed you have been bungling, and I am sorry to say" (with beautifully expressed mild self-condemnation) "so have I."

"That's vexatious; but what is it—money?"

"No—and yet, indirectly, yes," proceeded the Laird, feeling that he had got the sympathy of his son with him so far. "Now I wish to place this matter before you in such a plain way that it may appeal directly to your own common-sense."

"Thank you." (He knew that it was something very disagreeable which the Laird's individualism compelled him to utter.)

"You know, Walter, that I never do anything without a clearly defined motive. Well, when I consented to your marriage with Christina Thorston, I had a motive."

"You wished to make us happy," said Walter, with a startled smile.

"Exactly, but not quite in the way you are thinking. What is it the poet says?—"Love feeds the soul"—that's not right, but it is something to that effect; and that is the way you are thinking of happiness. I am practical: I say love is beautiful, love adds vastly to our enjoyment of life; but I also say love requires a leg of mutton to stand on."

The Laird chuckled at his own joke. Walter's face began to darken, but he remained respectfully silent.

"You are young; you are in love; you are enthusiastic:

therefore you are incapable of judging for yourself at present in things practical. I am—well, we won't say old, but considerably your senior; I am experienced; I am a politician: therefore I am the proper person to direct your present course so that hereafter you may be grateful to me and thankful on your own account."

"I shall be pleased to have your advice, sir," said Walter, his lips closing firmly.

"And I hope you will also be pleased to follow it. You have chosen a career—against my advice, remember—in which the worldly emoluments are small, very small. You may be useful—I will go as far as to say that I believe you would be useful even without a penny of your own—but your power of usefulness would be incalculably increased if you had independent means."

"Father, I cannot look upon the work in that way."

"You must allow me to look upon it in that way, however, and to advise—if necessary to command you. When I consented to this marriage I believed Christina Thorston to be the heiress to the Methven estate—that was the surprise I told you was in store."

"And now you have found that she is not the heiress?" (very coldly and deliberately).

"Yes, and therefore I say to you this affair must proceed no further. You are not to marry Christina Thorston."

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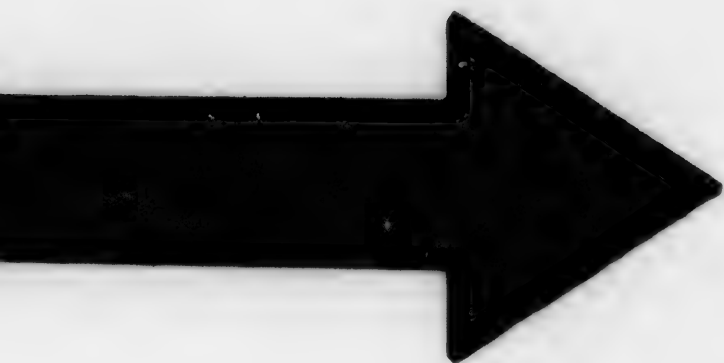
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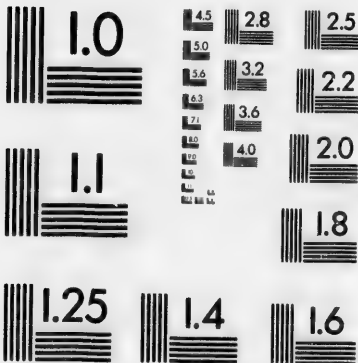
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CHAPTER XIII.

TEMPTATION.

WALTER had been prepared for something disagreeable ; but he was not prepared for the command to break off his marriage. At the words he lifted his head, quick and angry ; then suddenly became calm, smiling incredulously.

"That is not a pleasant joke, sir—I thought for an instant that you were serious."

He was so quiet and so respectful that he made it appear as if such a proposal could not be anything but a jest—and a very poor one.

The Laird was hurt ; he had wrought up to his climax, as he thought, so cleverly, and with such keen argument, that it seemed impossible to deny the force and necessity of his conclusion. And then to have it all treated as a bad joke !

"I am perfectly serious, Walter ; I speak for the girl's sake as much as for yours ; and you will offend me very much if you do not behave in this matter like a man of sense."

There came over Walter's face a dark expression—as if he had moved into a black shadow—which the father knew to be indicative of the very worst phase of his character—utter and unreasoning stubbornness.

"And a man of sense would——?"

"Would see that I have spoken out of the kindest feeling for you and for her ; and he would agree with me."

"I do not doubt the kindness of your motives, father ; but I am sorry that I must offend you, for I must ask you not to speak of this again. Our marriage will take place on this day month."

He wheeled about and quitted the room before Dalmahey could recover breath to reply. He was altogether taken aback by the calm resolution of his son ; he could have argued with him, and beaten him in the argument, he flattered himself.

But when a man quietly declines all discussion, and gives no opportunity to bring him to reason, what can you do but leave him to his own devices?

The Laird was angry. Children, he thought, were very different from what they used to be when a parent's word was law. He had been anxious only to insure his future welfare of "that youth," and here he was treated with silent contempt for his pains. Worse, he had been made to feel that it was a sort of contemptible thing to do, to make mischief between two young folk. But he was angry, and he was resolved that his word should be respected—resolved in fact to have his own way, whatever might be the cost; and he magnified the wisdom of his own ways, in order to quench that irritating suggestion of conscience that it would be best not to interfere any further.

"But these hot-headed youths and thoughtless lassies are always fools, and they blame their friends when it is too late to mend the blunders they have made themselves. I will not give them a chance to blame me. I shall do my best to save them from this folly."

He really had no evil intention; at that moment he was not thinking of his own hopes at all; he was only speculating upon the future troubles which Walter was preparing for himself with such dour perversity.

The Laird rode over to Craighburn.

He passed by fields of ripening grain which swayed softly to the wind, and sparkled yellow and green under the sun-rays; the distant roar of the sea swept over the moorland, and the hills before him looked blue, and black, and purple under the rapidly changing touch of the afternoon light. He returned civil salutes to the hearty greetings of the farmers who passed him in their gigs or on horse-back; but his thoughts were busy with one subject, and he could not halt to discuss the game-laws, or even the law of hypothec, with any of his acquaintances, though as a rule he was ready enough to avail himself of any opportunity to express his decided opinions on the popular side of any of these questions.

He found his sister, Dame Wishart, much as usual, a prisoner to her big chair, and impatiently waiting for the time when she would be able to march out as formerly, and pay her respects to the neighbours.

"Aye, Hugh, it's a sight for sare e'en to see you," she muttered; "but if I wore breeks, and had a vote, you'd be here fast enough."

"You forget that I have no interest in votes now—I gave up Parliament twenty years ago."

"Twenty years ago!—you're raving, man; it cannot be. I mind weel enough it was just the other day you were elected; and did you no spout that speech of yours to me and the cab-bages in the cauld winter morning, when the curlies, tipped with the frost, looked like a crowd of auld wives' heads in white mutches? Oh, I mind fine."

He made no further attempt to undeceive her as to the lapse of time; it would have been cruel to do so, the mistake afforded her so much enjoyment.

He signified to Grace that he wished to speak to her privately, and they went down-stairs together.

"I want to see your pansies, Grace—didn't you take the prize at the last show?"

"Yes, and I am very proud of it, for the pansies are my favourites; there is something so very subdued about them—they always make me think of sad eyes; they look up so wistfully, as if seeking for some lost hope. There, you will think me sentimental, uncle, and that would be dreadful!"

She, laughing, snatched up her garden-hat, took his arm, and they went out, followed by her dog, Pate. It was a shaggy collie, and seemed to be the most ferocious of animals, on account of the teeth of the under jaw overlapping the upper lip. For this "shot" mouth and his general ugliness he was, when a pup, condemned to be drowned; from that fate Grace rescued him, and as he grew up he showed a devotion for her alone, which suggested that he understood how much he was indebted to her. She used to say that he was the ugliest dog in the world, and the kindest and most sagacious. He did everything but speak, and he tried that sometimes when expressing thanks to his mistress.

Grace exhibited her pansies, and Laird examined them absently; indeed, he did not show the interest in them he professed to feel. They walked to the foot of the garden, where a green bank, now studded with buttercups and daisies, kept the burn in bounds during the frequent floods of winter.

She gathered flowers for a nosegay, and, when they reached a bower covered with honeysuckle, she sat down to arrange them. Pate stretched himself at her feet, his nose resting on his paws. The Laird remained standing.

"I want your assistance, Grace."

"In what way, uncle? You know how it pleases me to do anything for you" (her dainty fingers busy selecting the flowers from her lap).

"It is with Walter."

There was just the least little start, and the fingers trembled for a second on the stem of a rose.

"What has he been doing?"

"Making a fool of himself, as usual. Now, Grace, there is nobody who has so much influence over him as you have——"

"Wrong, uncle; my influence must give place to that of Teenie, now."

The Laird's eyes twinkled. Teenie! he had not thought of her, but she might be made the chief power in his scheme.

"But it is in regard to her that I want you to help me—I want to have this ridiculous marriage broken off at once."

Grace's head drooped over her flowers. She spoke in a low agitated voice—

"I thought you had given a full and free consent to the marriage."

"Well—yes—but—in fact, things have since come to my knowledge which have induced me to retract. For the girl's sake as well as Walter's, I think it right to prevent this affair going any further."

Her eyes were fixed steadily on the flowers. What a temptation there was offered to her! Prevent the marriage, and by-and-by—a long time hence—perhaps Walter might come back to her. And his father, who should know best, told her that it was for the girl's sake as much as Walter's. It would be right, it would be kind; and then the dreams of happiness, which she had been trying so hard to forget, might be realised—might—

She got up, scattering the unused flowers on the ground, and over Pate's ugly head—dusting the fragments off her dress with one hand, while the other held up the bouquet.

"I cannot help you in this, uncle," she said firmly; "it

would be unjust to Walter and cruel to Teenie to interfere with their arrangements now."

"I thought you cared more for him than to refuse to save him from an act of folly——"

He stopped ; her dark eyes were lifted to his face with such a pained look—they were like her pansies with the dew upon them.

"You know that I cannot speak to him on this subject' (voice subdued, but quite steady).

"There, there, child!" exclaimed Dalmahoy hastily; "I am anxious, therefore I am stupid and selfish; but I am the more anxious now that I see—well, never mind. I shall do what I can."

"She's at the greetin' for him," muttered the Laird as he rode home, "and he's a bigger fool than I thought. But we'll see."

She felt such a queer aching in her breast that Grace wondered if she had caught cold, or if it could be rheumatism. In her quiet way she was very merry, and Pate gambolled beside her; he was always ready to sympathise with her moods, gay or sad. But he could not see that her gaiety was close kin to tears.

She was indeed glad that she had been able to resist the temptation to join the Laird in his effort to stop the marriage; but she could not help speculating upon what might happen if he should be successful. Then she felt so full of shame and vexation at her own weakness—she felt so bitter against herself that she was ready to use a scourge to her own back with vigour. She would halt, dreaming, eyes fixed on the ground, until Pate roused her by placing his cold nose on her hand. Then she would start, with a kindly word to her friend, and hasten forward.

"Habbie Gowk brought this for you, mem," said a rosy-faced housemaid, handing a letter to her mistress.

"Thank you, Mary" (taking the letter listlessly, but stirring into quick interest when she recognised the penmanship); "tell Habbie to wait."

"Yes, mem; he's in the kitchen, and his donkey's in the stable-yard, and he says he's had naething to eat or drink the-day, but I think he's gey fou."

"Give him some dinner, then."

"Yes, mem."

And Mary hastened back to the house.

Grace, standing under a hawthorn-tree—bright with red berries, which, by contrast, made her bonnie face appear the paler—read the few lines Walter had written.

Frank and trustful, he was almost cruel in his utter faith in Grace. He forgot, or rather he did not know, what she was suffering. It was a hasty scrawl, telling her that his father had changed his mind about the marriage, and begging her to help him to satisfy the old gentleman that he was bound to redeem the pledge he had given Teenie.

"There is some wicked perversity in my nature," he wrote; "for my father's objections made me feel [†] more devoted to her."

He did not mention the motive which inspired his father's objection—he felt that to be a disgrace to them all.

Grace was pleased that he should appeal to her even in this matter, whilst her heart ached. How blind and stupid he must be, not to know that every word which showed his devotion to Teenie inflicted a wound upon her, by making her feel the more keenly that the love she craved for was given to another! But he trusted her; he had accepted with blind fidelity the hasty renunciation she had made. He loved her so much that he never doubted her truth. Well, she would be worthy of his trust—but how cruel they all were to come to her in this crisis!

Those wicked feelings which had tortured her of late began to rise again; but she would trample them underfoot. She would help Walter and Teenie, and in their happiness she would find her own.

Yet she felt very weak—ah, how she loved him! She had never known till now how entirely her best thoughts and hopes were concentrated in him. Would Teenie ever love him so? She dared not answer that, for she feared doing injustice to Teenie—and she was to be his wife. But she was proud now to think of the answer she had given to Dalmahoy. Aye, she would try, and try very hard, to be worthy of Walter's inconsiderate trust.

She went indoors, leaving Pate unnoticed in the hall, and he looked after her with wistful eyes, sensible that there was some-

thing wrong. He sat down and waited, his eyes fixed upon the door of the room, his teeth showing more ferociously than ever.

Grace wrote two brief letters—one to Walter, the other to Teenie. Then she went into the kitchen, followed by Pate, for he was privileged to go there. It was a bright, tidy place; dish-covers, polished to a degree, glistening on the walls; hams and comfortable sides of bacon dependant from the roof, interspersed with netfuls of onions. The kitchen despotism of the cook was unknown to these simple folk, and the mistress was as welcome in that region as in any other part of her own house.

"Where is Habbie?" she asked, looking round.

"Here, mem," answered a voice, and the owner appeared from behind a clothes-horse, wiping his mouth—which was full—with the cuff of his coat; "I hope I see you weel."

"Thanks, Habbie. I want you to take these notes for me to Mr. Walter Burnett and to Miss Thorston."

"Oo, aye, it will just be ae errand, for I'm sure to find young Dalmahoy at the Norlan' Head—he's aye there; and there's fine clashes going round the country about him and Thorston's lass. She's a braw quean, mem, and I wouldna wonder if there was some truth in what a' body says."

"I would like you to go to Dalmahoy first, though."

"Very weel, mem; it's a gowk's errand, but onything to obleege you."

Grace repeated her instructions, and the man, who had by this time got his mouth emptied, professed the most implicit obedience. As if determined to show that he could be brisk in her service, he finished his cog of ale at a gulp, seized his staff and bonnet, and made for the stable-yard as fast as his lame leg would allow him to go.

He found his donkey at the water-trough, looking rather melancholy; and, inspired by the importance of his mission, he asked the ostler somewhat pompously if his "beast" had got a feed.

"He's had a pickle straw and some thrustles," said the man, laughing, and with mock respect holding out his hand as if for a fee.

"I'm obleeged to ye," said Habbie, "and I'll be owing you something at the fair."

He mounted his steed and rode out of the yard—or court, as it is called—with more importance than the Laird himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE POET."

HABBIE GOWK—Geikie was the name, but popular humour had transformed it into Gowk, the equivalent of a fool; and Habbie accepted the amendment without murmur—Habbie was a man of importance.

He was a stout thick-set fellow; round cheeks and pale grey eyes; thin hair and shaggy beard; a broken nose, with an emphatic turn-up at the point. Dress: a threadbare tweed shooting-coat, of speckled brown colour, with capacious pockets at either side and in the breast; the side-pockets seemed to be always loaded, so that the coat hung heavily from the shoulders; vest of similar material, and, in default of buttons, fastened across his breast with large pins, which were very conspicuous; trousers of moleskin, well patched; and a fur cap, somewhat greasy, and in several places scalded-looking.

He had been lamed in childhood; he had been always "half cracked," and consequently he had never been expected to take part in the hard work of his fellows. However, he learned to read and write: he became the recognised clerk to all the lads and lasses of the district, who from ignorance or shyness could not write their own letters. This circumstance, combined with the reading of Burns, the Ettrick Shepherd, and other poets, whose works the minister lent him, and something in himself (vanity?) made him a poet.

He wrote verse as well as prose for his patrons; and he was rewarded with more hearty meeds of praise than most versifiers enjoy. His lameness interfered with his progress; he got a donkey for a few shillings, and so he was enabled to travel throughout the country, independent and happy. He wrote ballads—they were printed at the office of *Kingshaven Gazette*, on long strips of paper—and his pockets stuffed with bundles of his own "making," he wandered about from house to house, and from fair to fair, selling his ballads at a penny apiece.

Habbie, his donkey "Beattie" (named after "the Minstrel"), and his verses were recognised as a part of all the local gatherings, into the midst of which he rode always with the same song—

"I'm Habbie Gowk o' Rowanden ;
Here's ballants for the maids and men,
I wrat 'em wi' my ain pen."

On occasion he was ready enough with sly retort. At the house of a farmer, who soon after the death of his first wife had taken for his second spouse a woman who was a "manager"—that is, extremely stingy—and who covered her stinginess with extreme piety: the mistress entered the kitchen where Habbie, as a matter of course, was about to take his kail with the ploughmen. She was not pleased by the appearance of this ungodly interloper, and she insisted upon hearing the men say grace before they began their meal. Habbie got up and, remembering the guidwife who was no more, said—

"Guid and gracious, she is gane,
Proud and saucy she's come hame ;
Cauld kail and little bread—
Oh, guid gracious, that she was dead !"

Habbie was never admitted to that kitchen again. He did not care ; his rhymes and his gossip obtained for him a welcome in so many places.

"How do you make your ballads, Habbie ?" said an aspiring poet to him one day.

"Oo, I make my ballads best when I'm just lying on my back in a ley-field, chawing a carrot."

It was a free and joyful life he led, wandering from town to town, across the moors and through the bosky glens, by the shore and over the hills. But there came a season when he was sick, and harvest was bad, and poor Habbie and his donkey were like to starve. The Kingshaven Gas-works had just opened, and a time-keeper was wanted. The provost and bailies—meaning kindly—thought that this would be an excellent appointment for Habbie. He could write well ; he could sum a little ; his lameness was no obstacle ; and so they offered him the place, making it a solemn condition with him that from that date forth he would never attempt to write a line of verse.

Habbie, weak with sickness, looked at his donkey, and for the donkey's sake agreed. The provost would have had him sell the companion of his wandering, but that was too much. He refused; so the provost yielded, and Habbie, with his donkey, entered upon the important duties of time and gate-keeper of the Kingshaven and Rowanden Gas-works.

The provost congratulated himself upon having done a charitable action and reclaimed a vagrant. Habbie felt that he had sunk very low in the world, but for the first week he was punctual and attentive to his duties—the weather happened to be misty and dull. The sun shone—Habbie became restless. Sitting on a high stool in the wooden box at the gate, the time-book before him, and rows of figures dazzling his eyes, he snatched up a scrap of paper and the stump of a pencil, inspired with the grand idea of turning the multiplication table into rhyme. He remembered his pledge, and with a sigh put away the paper and pencil. The high walls which enclosed the gas-works looked to him like the walls of a prison. He began to feel as if he could not breathe in such a narrow space.

At first Dubbieside was proud of his protégé; but Habbie began to make blunders and to drink. He was visited with remonstrances and warnings; he was suspected of having resumed his bad habit of making rhymes, which would account for all his stupidity. He said nothing; he tried to be submissive and to become a "respectable member of the community," as the provost put it. But he looked wistfully at Beattie grazing contentedly at the roadside; then his eyes wandered over the moorland, and to the blue headline of the hills. He never had any notion until now how hard it was to be respectable.

He began to hate the works, to hate the smell of tar and gas, and to feel more and more oppressed by the high walls. In proportion his longing grew for the freedom of the old life, the sweet smell of the heather and the wild roses.

A crisis came. He horrified the whole community, and nearly ruined the provost's social position, by one wild declaration—

"What for shouldna dogs and donkeys ha'e sowls as weel as us? aye, and even fleas for that matter? They couldna bite in the next world."

It was impossible for honest folk to receive gas in the manufacture of which a man of such terrible opinions had the remotest share. A meeting of the board of directors was called, and to attend it provost, bailies, and councillors were marching up the street, when they were startled by wild shouts and laughter.

A rabble of boys and girls were coming down from the direction of the gas-works, shouting, laughing, and scampering about in the most riotous manner. In their midst was Habbie Gowk, mounted on his donkey, flaunting yards of ballads over his head, and crying at the pitch of his voice his old song—

“I’m Habbie Gowk o’ Rowanden ;
Here’s ballants for the maids and men,
I wrat ‘em wi’ my ain pen.”

Dubbieside and his companions were dumb with dismay and indignation. Habbie rode past them in triumph, shaking his ballads under their noses and laughing in their horror-struck faces.

He had broken bounds at last. Sunshine, moorland, and hills, the heather and the wild roses, had carried the day against the dull walls and a sure dinner. Habbie returned to his old nomade kind of life, wrote his ballads and sold them as he best could, and took his chance with Beattie of bed and board wherever they wandered.

Nothing could ever tempt Habbie to try to be respectable again. In the first trial he had been utterly miserable. “I’d ha’e been fit for the worms in another week,” he said, “and I was beginning my ain epitaph when Beattie came to me ; syne I just louped on his back, tell’t the gas and the provost to gang to the deevil, and awa’ we came.”

He was happy and contented in his way. He was much liked by the women, men and bairns of the two counties in which he made his rounds—the women for his gossip and songs, the men for his news and usefulness, the bairns for his fantastic stories about witches, and brownies, and fairies. He carried letters and parcels from neighbour to neighbour ; and although he rarely had a shilling of his own in his pocket he, was frequently trusted by the farmers of the outlying districts with large sums of money to deposit in the village bank. Drunk or

sober, Habbie was never known to make a mistake in these monetary transactions.

He made his way to Dalmahoy and inquired for Maister Walter, but that gentleman was absent.

"I ken'd that fine," said Habbie, "but I just came to please the leddy. I ken where to find him. Would you no like to buy my new ballant, my braw lass? It's about the bonnie leddy o' the Dee. She was just a quean like yoursel', and she was guid and bonnie as you are, and she married the laird's strapping son, and sae became the leddy o' his houses and lands."

"There's waur nor me has married a laird's son," said the lass with a toss of her head and a twinkle in her eye.

"And that's true enough," said Habbie nodding gravely, "for thae e'en of yours would tempt the duke himsel', let alone a laird's loon."

"None o' your havers!" cried she, blushing and pleased, as she bought the ballad.

After this stroke of business Habbie rode on to the Norlan' Head, singing or brooding by the way, just as the humour seized him.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAIRD'S VISIT.

"**A**ND what should the Laird want with me?" exclaimed Teenie, inclined to resent the somewhat authoritative message inviting her to Dalmahoy.

"He dinna say," was Drysdale's response, sitting in the gig bolt upright and grim, "but I suppose he'll tell you when you get there."

He unbuttoned the leather apron at her side, and waited as if for her to jump in.

She hesitated—why, she could not tell—then she got her bonnet and shawl, and took the seat beside Drysdale. Ailie was proud of this new token of the Laird's regard, and called her a "saucy ted" for thinking of saying no to the invitation.

Drysdale said, "It's a fine afternoon."

"Teenie said, "Yes."

Drysdale: "Grand weather for the crops."

Teenie: "Yes."

That was all the conversation. He was a man who spoke little, except on occasions when he reached his sixth tumbler, and then he became loquacious about the "panoramy" and his Canadian experiences. She was at this moment in a somewhat fierce mood. Although she could not define the real reason, her spirit had rebelled at the air of patronage with which Dalmahoy had treated them on his visit to the cottage; and she had felt even more rebellious at the plain message delivered by Drysdale, "The Laird wants to see you immediately."

Had it not been for the visit she might have interpreted the message as Ailie did—as another mark of favour. But she could not do that. She fretted and felt angry whilst she complied. She wished that Walter or her father had been within reach, as either might have saved her a good deal of vexatious wonderings.

Habbie Gowk had taken a short cut across the moor, and so

missed Teenie, or the letter he carried might have enlightened and encouraged her.

As she drove up to the big house she had an uncomfortable feeling that her plain shawl and bonnet, and her homely dress were sadly out of keeping with the grandeur of this place, of which by-and-by she was to be the mistress. She would have liked to go round the other way, and to get in quietly by the back door. But Drysdale, acting upon instructions, drove up to the main entrance.

The ostler took the horse's head; Drysdale and the footman offered their assistance to Teenie in descending, with a sort of stiff civility, as if she had been some lady of importance; but she ignored their proffered services, and sprang lightly to the ground.

She was conducted across the big hall, and there again she felt a shrinking sensation, as if there was something discordant about herself in association with this place. But that only made her feel the more fierce and bold in her outward bearing.

Dalmahoy received her in the drawing-room, a long, narrow apartment, with high roof and heavy panels of oak, and crowded with dark stiff-backed furniture. It was an ancient, cold and gloomy room, the furniture of which seemed to have been arranged by some painfully correct law of rule and compass. Every chair, table, and lounge stood as if nailed to its place, at an exact distance from the other, looking as if it had never been moved from its spot, and was never intended to be moved.

Poor Teenie felt inclined to shiver as with cold when the door was thrown open, and she was ushered into this uncomfortable-looking chamber.

The Laird advanced with the most stately manner imaginable, and quite in keeping with his surroundings, took her hand, and conducted her to a seat. She yielded, notwithstanding the wild desire which possessed her to turn and fly. She felt more and more chilled, more and more conscious of the incongruity between herself and this, to her eyes, awfully grand place.

The Laird had wickedly calculated upon making an impression of this kind, and he mentally congratulated himself upon the success of his scheme so far. He was painfully courteous in his manner of leading her across the room, as if she had been a lady of royal blood; she felt as if he were mocking her as he

bowed low when she sat down on the couch, and expressed in a soft respectful tone the extreme pleasure he experienced in receiving her at Dalmahoy.

Teenie would have cried with vexation, only that was one of the arts of young-ladyism she had never acquired. So she only sat staring at him, somewhat fierce in herself, and wondering what it all meant.

He asked how she had been since their meeting ; inquired for her father, and his "good friend" Alison.

"What was it you wanted to see me for?" interrupted Teenie with her disagreeable frankness.

The Laird was staggered for an instant but he was equal to the occasion, and with corresponding frankness he answered—

"Thank you, Christina ; your honest nature relieves me of much difficulty. Now, with ordinary ladies I would not have known how to approach the unhappy subject upon which I must speak to you ; but you relieve me at once."

She did not know whether that was a compliment or not ; but she nodded and said—

"All right—go on."

Thought the Laird : "Good heavens, how coarse !"

Said the Laird : "Thank you again Christina ; and I will imitate your charming frankness by telling you what I want without the least circumlocution. It is about Walter."

"Yes," she said, very meekly now.

He drew a chair forward, seated himself facing her, and spoke in a quite confidential manner.

"You know he is very young ; he is passionate, and not easily guided. It is therefore necessary that I, who have more than a father's affection for him, and knowing how poor I shall leave him"—he glanced round the room and at her, as if he could not expect her to understand how he, the master of that place, could be poor—"it is necessary, I say, that I should look anxiously to his future, and endeavour to save him, so far as in me lies, from the consequences of his own folly."

"Surely any father would do the same."

The Laird was staggered again, and again he rose equal to the occasion.

"My dear Christina, I cannot expect you to enter quite into my views at once ; but let me tell you, most fathers would

leave an obstinate son to pay the penalty of his own blunders. I, however, wish to make the way of the future smooth for my son ; and I wish to spare him the humiliation of being the destroyer of an old and much-respected house."

He was so grand, and he was so sincere, that she could only say in a dazed way—

"Yes."

"Well then, let me take things in their due order—it is most painful for me, and it will vex you ; but I believe you love Walter."

She moved uneasily ; she drew breath with difficulty, and her eyes flashed upon him savagely. That was a matter he had no right to touch upon.

"Hear me," he pleaded very humbly, and that held her fast to the seat. "It is because I know you like him so much that I have asked you to come here, that I might beg of you to save him from the ruin of all his prospects, from the toil and misery which he must endure if —"

The Laird made a grand pause, which he expected to be effective. She only said in a quiet way—

"Very well, go on."

"If he marries you !"

She jumped up.

"Please hear me—it is for his sake," he pleaded again, catching her hand and pressing her back upon the seat. "I am going to confess to you something that will make me appear very mean in your eyes, but it is for his sake. When I consented to your marriage, I believed that you were the heiress to the great Methven estate. I like you, I respect you, but—I will be perfectly honest—that was why I consented to the marriage ; but for that mistake I would have refused my sanction as much for your sake as for his. You know that Grace Wishart loves him ; she has wealth, and only you stand between them. That is why I have asked you to come here, that I might beg you to save me from remorse, which will make my few remaining years miserable—to beg you to save him from— from that must be an unhappy union. Will you help me ?"

"In what way ?"

"By refusing to marry him."

"Did he know about this fortune you thought I was to get ?"

The Laird hesitated, and then he told a lie—
"Yes."

She was standing up, very cold, and fierce, and scornful.

"And does he wish you to say this to me?"

Dalmahoy also rose, agitated, hesitating, doubtful how far he might go without bringing upon himself open disgrace. He was on the point of telling another lie—for he saw that she was ready to yield—when a man stepped between them with one word, full of pity, shame and reproach.

"Father!"

It was Walter. He had entered unobserved by either party, in the excitement of the conversation. He had overheard the last two or three sentences, and he guessed the rest: they were full of bitterness and shame to him.

He put his arm around Teenie, and kissed her tenderly.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHADOWS.

THE position was awkward, and there was silence for a minute. The Laird swung his glasses in pendulum fashion and regarded the others innocently, like a man who is aware that his conduct is liable to misconstruction, but whose conscious rectitude sustains him in the hour of trial ; he was wishing he could discover whether or not Walter had heard that little fib, and he was in a manner glad that the second one had not been uttered.

Walter had heard it.

Teenie drew back a step, putting his arm away from her, looking at him with those clear far-seeking eyes of hers. She saw that he was very calm, although his face was pale. It was said of him by his brothers and sisters that he was most resolute and most unmanageable when he was quietest. But she was looking farther. She was striving to get a glimpse of that future which Dalmahoy had represented in such dismal colours. She was striving to discover what it was right for her to do after the appeal just made to her. Was she to ruin his prospects ? Was she to make him unhappy ? Was she to risk that ?

Her heart craved for him in such a wild passionate way that she was ready to dare anything—but not if he were to suffer by it. She had never known anything approaching to fear until now, and she did fear ; but it was for him, not herself. Slowly the sense of the utter change in herself dawned upon her ; but how quickly the change had been effected ! Her very love was the source of her new-born cowardice.

Was it the mistake about that fortune which had tempted him to speak ? And was he going on with the engagement out of pity to her ? She could and would do anything because she loved him, but she would not have anything for pity.

She put the thought—or suspicion—into words and asked him—

“Were you thinking about the siller when you made me so glad?”

He took her hand, pressing it warmly. She could not doubt that his heart was in his words.

“You are my fortune,” he said smiling.

He was ambiguous, but he could not tell her his father had stooped to a falsehood.

“But the Laird says——”

He held up his hand, stopping her.

“My father is very kind to me; he is only anxious that I may have a successful career. You must not blame him, or be angry with him, if he has said anything to vex you. I have been up at Drumliemount to-day, and the cottage will soon be ready for us.”

Teenie had nothing more to say.

“Very well, Walter,” said the Laird in an injured tone; “I have done my best to save you, and Christina would have helped me, but for you. I wash my hands of the whole affair from this day forth; and all I have to say is, that whatever happens, you cannot blame me. I regret having interfered.”

Dalmahoy bade Teenie good-bye, somewhat pompously but kindly, and marched out of the room, glad enough to escape without any exposure, whilst he was satisfied that he had been doing only his duty.

“I wish I knew what to do,” exclaimed Teenie.

“There is nothing for you to do but to get ready for our wedding, and to prepare yourself to settle down into the humdrum ways of the wife of a poor country minister.

“You say that just to please me.”

“Of course I do, for in pleasing you I please myself.”

She was not satisfied, but she could not argue with him. He proposed that she should see his sisters. He had told them of the marriage, and they were most anxious to congratulate the bride.

“No,” said Teenie very decisively, “I will see no more of your folk to-day. I want to get back to the Norlan’.”

She almost shuddered as she glanced from one end of the

long dark room to the other. The shafts of light which penetrated it through the three high and narrow windows, served only to make the shadowy recesses and corners appear the more gloomy. "There should be fires here," was her mechanical reflection; her thoughts were far away from the subject.

He was sorry, but he did not attempt to persuade her; she had been too much tried and agitated already. He got the gig and himself drove her home. She was glad to have him with her, glad to feel that he was near her, although she scarcely spoke a word.

They found the skipper, telescope in hand, trying to make out the character of a brig which was passing far out at sea; Alison standing at the door knitting, and listening to Habbie Gowk, who, seated on a tub which he had turned upside down for that purpose, was busy explaining the comparative merits of Dorking and Brahma-poutra hens as egg-layers.

"There they are!" he cried, jumping up and almost knocking Alison over the doorstep in his excitement. "I ken'd I would find them together. They're a braw pair. They were just made for ither."

He hobbled forward as Teenie alighted.

"I wish you muckle joy, hinny, and a lang life," he said heartily. Then in an undertone, as if it were a secret of deepest importance, "I'm going to make the best ballant that I ever made for your wadding."

"Hoots!" cried Teenie, and was passing into the house—rather displeased than otherwise to discover that her marriage was already the common talk of the town and district—when Habbie begged her to wait a minute. After pulling out several bundles of his songs, scraps of dirty paper, and bits of cord, he at last found the letters.

"That one's for you, and that for you, sir—from Miss Wishart."

Grace again! Teenie was ready to crumple the letter in her hand without reading it. Somehow Grace's name confronted her at every turn, and made her feel angry without the slightest apparent reason. Walter was already reading his letter, and she could see that it pleased him very much, for he was smiling—admiration and gratitude in the smile.

Teenie went into the house.

"You ha'e gotten the brawest lass in the twa counties, sir—and the best, if you only guide her right."

"I'll try, Habbie, thank you," said Walter with a short laugh; but he did not feel so light of heart as he had done a few days ago. That question of guiding her right—of guiding himself right—was a very serious one.

Teenie was up in her room reading the letter; it was full of kindly, generous thoughts. It told her that the writer was coming to see her, to offer help in the arrangements for the wedding; warned her that she was not to be distressed if she found the Dalmahoy family a little cold at first, and implored her to think of Grace Wishart as her true and devoted friend under all circumstances.

If Teenie had only got that letter before her interview with the Laird, she would have been pleased by it; she would have appreciated the unselfish nature of the writer, and she would not have been so much depressed by the scene at Dalmahoy. But receiving it now!—she felt pity in every word, and she hated pity. She did not want to be pitied by anybody, and least of all by her! She was inclined to resent the letter as an intentional affront, and yet she could not forget the brave self-sacrificing spirit of Grace; she could not forget the affectionate welcome she had received from her; and she could not doubt her truth. But all this upset Teenie, and put her out of humour. She had been accustomed to find things so straight and plain in the life she had hitherto led, that she could not understand people saying one thing and meaning another; and yet that was what the Laird had done. Radiating from him, all the world seemed to be condemning her for agreeing to become Walter's wife. Well, why did they not say it outright, and let her understand the position? She liked Dalmahoy for one thing—he had spoken plainly at last. But sniffs, and sneers, and foreboding shakes of the heads, she could not understand them, and she hated the people who used them.

She had cried out to Walter, "I wish I knew what to do."

In her blunt way she pulled herself up, and asked the question—

"Wouldn't it be best just to say that I'll no have him?"

And so end it all. End it all?—how her poor heart trembled at that! and how blank and weary the whole world looked

under that light ! If she could only reach that something beyond the present life, that mysterious something for which she had so often looked far across the sea, which she never found, and never yet realized in her own mind, she might have ended it all. But he had come and told her of his love, and that had seemed to be the something for which she had been craving, until these doubts and warnings made her sensible that she had not yet attained the mysterious something for which she yearned ; yet her heart craved for him, and she could not give him up.

She would not give him up. The fierce spirit which rebelled against everything like coercion, rose within her, and she resolved to marry him in spite of every opposition and counsel. Then came the meekness, and to her strange cowardice, when she thought of him, and of the Laird's words, that he would ruin all his future prospects if he should marry her.

If he should marry her ! It was very hard for her who loved him so, to decide how to act, when he was so persistent in declaring that his whole happiness lay in her hands, that she alone could make his future bright and prosperous.

What did he mean, if it was not what she wished him to mean ? She beat her hands helplessly against the air ; she cried for guidance and for help ; and then the burthen of the old song returned to her—she loved him, and she could not give him up.

All this time Walter was waiting patiently to see her before he should return home.

" Don't think anything about what my father said," he whispered to her when she came to him ; " it is his anxiety to see me comfortably placed that made him speak. We'll go up and see the house to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVII.

DRUMLIEMOUNT.

THEY walked up the hill together, toward the little squat grey church at the top. There was still a shadow lying across Teenie's heart, and the brightness of the day did not dispel it. She tried to hide it from him, and failed. Walter was making an honest effort to win her back to the old free and fearless nature.

Above them, a pale blue sky, diversified with mountains of fleece, fringed with bright silver ; behind them, the sea, glistening white and green, heaving gently, and singing its song, which is always merry or sad according to the humour of the listener ; the scrambling houses of Rowanden, and the ever-changing group of men, women, and children on the shore ; the wind sweeping up with its salt savour from the sea, and whistling coldly in their ears.

Before them, a yellow tortuous road, hedge-bound, and winding over a hill that would have been bleak and barren, but for the small plantation of firs and evergreens growing around the manse—planted there to protect the house from the sharp blasts of "the razor."

The cottage which the new minister was to occupy was on the opposite side of the road from the old manse, surrounded by a thick hedge and a few evergreens, but unprotected by any trees, except a few apple trees in the garden at the back. But it was a pretty place, of modern construction, and with many conveniences : it had been erected by a retired officer, who had lived only a few years to enjoy his residence. It faced the sea, and the front wall was covered with roses and honeysuckle.

The lovers walked leisurely upward. Walter made fun of the winding road and the hill, playfully telling her that it was an emblem of their future career—always a toil up-hill towards home ; but he would be quite contented if he might walk always hand-in-hand with her as they were doing now.

"Are you sure you will always be content with that?" she said, looking at him quickly.

"Sure?"—he was going to answer lightly, but he saw that she was very earnest; and so he spoke gravely and tenderly: "As sure, Teenie, as a man can be of anything in his own nature. I cannot foresee, because I cannot understand, any change in my views on this subject. This is what I desire, this is what I seek—a simple life with you and my books, trying to do well ourselves, and trying to help others to accept life and its troubles humbly, hopefully, and gratefully."

"Did your father say anything more about—about me?"

He did not like the question; but he answered it frankly.

"Yes, he took me to task again last night, and repeated a number of unpleasant counsels and possibilities which are no doubt true enough to him, but they are not true at all to me."

"Why?"

"Because we look at things from entirely different points of view."

Silence. He did not think it necessary to tell her *how* his father had spoken of her and of the engagement.

"It is all very well just now," the Laird had said, "the heat of enthusiasm and calf-love is upon you. But I tell you, I know what the world is, I know what human nature is, and you will repent. You will be sorry for having despised my counsel, when it is too late. We have not got into the millenium yet; and human nature is much the same to-day as it was yesterday, and will be to-morrow. You think I do not understand your character; but I do, better than yourself. You are as ambitious as the devil, and six months hence you will find this girl a weight upon your wings, utterly preventing your rising from the ground, and you will hate her. What do you say to that?"

"I would say that, in regard to us, it is extraordinary" (smiling incredulously).

"Much worse—it's true," said Dalmahoy sharply. "However, you know my principles; I have bothered myself more than usual over this affair. I don't like to be annoyed, and I won't be annoyed by it any more. Do as you please, only don't blame me. I have done my best to save you; I have asked Grace, and she refused to help me; I have asked the

girl herself, and she refuses, which she would not have done if she had cared for you in the ridiculous way you fancy."

"She acted very bravely and honestly, sir; she would have yielded to you but for me."

"Quite so; I have nothing to say against her. I have done with the whole affair. Only there's a lesson I have learned from it—one is never too old to learn—and by which you may profit in your new career."

"Yes, sir."

"It is that Methven affair which has taught me the lesson—believe nothing that you hear, and only half what you see; and then there will be a chance of your getting on comfortably through the world without offending your neighbours."

With that sententious utterance the Laird dropped the whole affair, and satisfied that he was duly consulting the greatest happiness of the greatest number—he as usual being in the majority—he turned to his own enjoyment.

Walter could not repeat all this selfish counsel to her. He opened the little wooden gate, and they entered the precincts of their future home. The workmen were busy in the house, painting, papering, and carpentering. The grandchildren of the old bed-ridden minister, whose place Walter was to take, attracted by the bustle, were romping about the empty house. One chubby little fellow was standing near the doorway with a yellow basin and a clay pipe, earnestly blowing soap-bubbles to his own intense delight, and occasionally cheered by the approval of his brothers and sisters when they happened to be near him in the course of their game of hide-and-seek.

This was to be the parlour and dining-room; that was to be the drawing-room, with the window opening to the garden; and here in the corner, with the two windows, one to the road and the other to the garden, was to be his study. Up-stairs were the bed-rooms, small but cozy. And so on.

After they had explored the house, and acknowledged the grinning salutations of the workmen, they went out to the garden. Behind the house they had a good piece of ground for potatoes and cabbages; and if they required more, the neighbouring field might be rented. In front there was a fair space of grass for bleaching and croquet, and as much space for flowers as they were likely to require.

They sat down, she on a garden roller, he on the edge of a wheelbarrow. Before them, the slope of the hill and the glistening sea; behind them, the rose-covered cottage, and the little fellow blowing his soap-bubbles.

"We will be very happy here, Teenie; don't you think so?"

Up went a bubble, wavering in the inconstant wind, gleaming with all the colours of the rainbow - then suddenly falling upon the ground, a drop of soap and water.

"Ay, Walter, I hope so" (she used to call him Wattie in the old days of childhood).

"You see that tower there" (pointing to the stunted square tower of the church, with its wooden slits to admit air and to let out the sound of the bell); "well, when the bell calls the fisher-folk up from Rowanden, and the farmer-folk from across the moors, I want to teach them to come gladly as to a merry feast, and you will help me to do that."

Up went another bubble. "Eh, but that's a fine one!" cried the child.

"I'll do what I can, but I'm no sure that I can be of much use to you."

Her eyes were gazing into his so anxiously; she did not know how she was to help him in the work he seemed to be so bent upon, but she wished to help him, and that was everything.

"I picture to myself such a glorious life, with you beside me, always ready to cheer me when my heart fails, always inspiring me with new courage and hope when I am, in my weakness, inclined to falter and halt."

"Bonnie an' bonnier, bigger an' bigger!" cried the child as another bubble, larger than the others, went up, and his companions cheered its bright ascent.

"But it's out already," cried one of the children, with much disappointment and reprimand in the tone.

"I couldna help that," cries the bubble-blower; "look at this one!"

"Of course, we must expect to have trials, and difficulties to overcome; nobody can escape them," Walter went on; "but we'll try to make them light to each other by sharing them bravely, and by feeling that our love endures, although everything else should fail us."

"Tsha ! that's no a guid one ava," exclaimed the audience of the bubble-blower.

Her eyes were fixed upon him, the clear truth and love that was in her heart shining like sunlight on his face, and filling his soul with gracious hope and pleasure.

"You may be sure of that," said Teenie in a very low voice.

"That's grand !" cried the chorus of children as another big bubble floated up gently and disappeared in the air. That was the most successful of the experiments yet made.

"Heaven bless you, Teenie, for those words," he said fervently ; "it is not easy for a man to oppose all who care for him, and who cannot wish anything but his well-being ; yet I have been obliged to do that, and I have been glad and proud to do it for your sake. But it is an immense relief and satisfaction to know that you are content, and that you are resolved to brave all the dangers of the future with me."

"You're making a botch o't," ejaculated one of the boys ; "let me ha'e a try."

Teenie looked toward the sea ; she was remembering the angry thoughts which filled her mind yesterday. Was she content ? She did not know. She felt nothing but that she wished to be his wife—that she would be devoted to him whatever happened, and she could not realize any of the trials and difficulties to which he alluded.

"You'll wonder at what I am going to say, Walter ; but last night it came to me, and I cannot get the notion out of my head," she said, looking straight at him. "Grace Wishart was brave, and set you free when she saw that it was best for you ; ought not I to do the same, when I see that it would be best for you ?"

He was startled by this proposal, made so quietly and with apparently such mature consideration.

"But you cannot see that," he exclaimed ; "the positions are entirely different ; you would destroy, not help me, if you were to forsake me."

"I wish I was sure of that," she answered dreamily, again gazing toward the restless sea.

The boys were sending up the bubbles in quick succession ; they flashed an instant many colours in the delighted eyes of the children, and then went out.

"You cannot wish to make me miserable."

"No" (as before).

"You cannot wish to make me turn away from all the hopes I have cherished—from the work I have dreamed of doing, with you beside me to help and cheer me. You cannot wish that, and that is what would happen if you were to leave me. I would think the whole world bad, and life not worth having."

His voice was subdued; but there was deep passion in his tone—in his face and his eyes as he bent toward her.

"I will never leave you, Walter, until I feel sure that you will be happier without me—that is what made me think of it; but I'm not sure that I would have been able to do it, even if you wanted me."

She smiled at her own weakness; and he was proud of it. He would have hugged her on the spot, but he was checked in time by a blithe shout from the children.

"Then we'll not speak any more about these unpleasant things. We'll just be sensible, and set quietly about our arrangements, and we'll settle down into a douce cozy couple before the honeymoon is out."

"But your folk are so set against me——"

"Hush!—you must not think that; besides, you are going to marry only me, not all my folk."

"But that fortune the Laird thought I was to have?"

"For my sake, Teenie, don't let me hear another word about that fortune, or it will drive me out of my wits, as I think it has done half the people of the county. What is it to us?—we want nothing but one another, and, having that, all the money in the world cannot add to our happiness, or take away from it."

There was such a beautiful bubble went up at that moment; the bairns hurrahed and danced with pleasure, and watched it till it disappeared.

He made her so happy, because he told her just what she wanted to believe; and at the moment she really thought that her doubts were satisfactorily answered—that the future was made plain to her, a long life of loving companionship, full of joy because their love was so sure and true. What indeed should she care whether the Dalmahoy folk were set against her or not?—she had nothing to do with them. Grace Wishart,

who was good and generous, was her friend, and had told her that she was right ; why then should she think of anything but the bright sunshine that was falling upon her ? Why should she hear anything but blithe songs in the minstrelsy of the birds around her, and in the distant roar of the sea which the wind carried up the height, modulated and harmonised by its journey ?

She found new pleasure in looking round the place which was to be her home—in settling various details of arrangement, and in trying to remember the countless little odds and ends which would be requisite for prudent and thrifty house-keeping.

They went into the house to pay their respects to old Mr. Geddies ; but this was one of his bad days, and his widowed daughter—mother of the bubble-blowers—who was his house-keeper, thought they had better not see him.

So they went down the hill together. The complexion of everything and everybody had changed to Teenie since she had gone up to Drumliemount. She was so happy that all the world seemed gay, and Walter the best and bravest gentleman that ever lived.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT FOLK SAID.

THE preparations for the wedding proceeded briskly ; but the event was (happily for those most concerned) deprived of much of the importance it would have obtained in local eyes, by the excitement prevailing in reference to the Methven fortune.

The news of the million which had been left heirless, had dropped like a bomb-shell into the quiet life of Kingshaven and Rowanden, burst, and spread frenzy, enmity, and bitterness of heart around. Claims the most absurd were suddenly discovered and advanced ; relationships were made out in the most ingenious fashion ; and even trivial services rendered to the deceased were suggested as titles to a share in the enormous wealth he had left.

Men and women, hitherto contented and happy with what they possessed, became inspired with feverish excitement, utterly dissatisfied with their lot, and ready to stake their last penny in the effort to win the Methven fortune.

If George Methven had devoted all his genius to discover how he might most severely punish those who had been harsh and unkind to him in his youth, he could not have formed a more successful plan than that of dying without a will.

The provost quarrelled with the bailies, the bailies with the councillors, and the wives fomented the disturbance, besides getting up a pretty ado on their own account as to their respective claims. The humbler classes were not behind their superiors ; hard-working fishers, sturdy tradesmen, joined the halloo, forsaking honest work for that purpose, and paying the penalty in hunger and a vexed spirit.

The Methven family had suddenly become as large as that of Adam himself. Old friendships were broken off ; family ties only rendered disputes more bitter ; faces which had been jovial became eager and suspicious ; hearts which had been open to

charitable and kindly thoughts were closed against all comers. Honest, God-fearing people, who had been always ready to help a neighbour in distress, became spiteful and vicious, each blaming the other for advancing groundless claims to the property, and so confusing the title of the rightful heir, who was always the person making the charge.

The fortune had brought a curse upon them, and rich and poor alike were unhappy in their eagerness to clutch it.

The lawyers smiled, and made hay whilst the sun shone ; they warned their clients of the hopelessness of their claims ; but the clients paid the fees, and insisted upon the investigations and appeals proceeding.

"Did you ever hear the like of that ?" cried Mrs. Dubbieside flopping down on the sofa ; "they say that the girl Thorston is the heiress, and she is to marry Dalmahoy's son on the strength of it !"

"I'm glad somebody has been found to heir it, for I'm sick of the whole affair," returned the provost, who was fond of peace, and had been very much badgered in regard to this subject. Eager as he was to have a share of the money, he had been so tormented about it, that he was coming round to the sensible conclusion that a man with his carriage and lamps should despise and keep clear of the squabbles which were raging throughout the district.

Mrs. Dubbieside's fat person shook all over with indignation.

"You give me a dreadful stitch—you're such a coward, Dubbieside !"

"Maybe."

"I wouldn't be surprised if you meant to give in ; yet you know that your mother was Jean Methven's aunt, and what claim could be clearer ?"

"We'll see what the lawyers say."

But whatever doubts the provost might feel at home, he showed none of them abroad.

"The provost's an ass," growled Dr. Lumsden, the bailie ; "he pretends to think he has a chance, when he knows that my grandmother was full cousin on her father's side to the auld wife Methven. Let them come nearer than that if they can."

And so the strife went on ; and the only interest felt in regard to Teenie's marriage was inspired by the question, was

she or was she not the heiress to the Methven fortune? The ladies of course found time to express their amazement that young Dalmahoy should have chosen such a wife.

"A wild thing, utterly uneducated, and cannot play the piano!" exclaimed the banker's partner, thinking of her own three daughters, who had acquired three accomplishments at an Aberdeen boarding-school.

"I dare say he will think himself lucky if she should turn out to be the heiress," said Mrs. Brunton.

"Her the heiress!—it's perfect nonsense to mention it!"

"As like her as anybody, for it seems that it all depends upon the kinship with the man's mother."

"Take my word for it, the Thorstons will not get it," and Mrs. Shaw nodded as if she knew more than she cared to tell. The banker's lady had acquired a reputation for sagacity at a very cheap rate—she predicted the failure of everything and everybody, and as there are so many more failures than successes in the world, she was able to say, "I told you so," much more frequently than her neighbours. She now predicted not only that Teenie would not get the fortune, but also that "she had no qualification for a minister's wife."

Mrs. Brunton failed to see why the fact of her not being able to play the piano should be so fatal to the girl's future, and with much self-satisfaction she remarked—

"There's more folk than Thorston's lass cannot play the piano, and live very well for all that."

It was a cruel stroke, for Mrs. Shaw had not the least sense of music, and had once mistaken "Tullochgorum" for a psalm-tune.

Interest in the marriage was vastly quickened when, thanks to the charming widow Smyllie, it became known that Dalmahoy was opposed to the match. Report said he was to forbid the banns, and to disinherit his son. The falsehood of the report gave it relish; it spread, and magnified as it spread. Details of a dreadful scene between the Laird and Walter were confidentially exchanged at tea-tables and supper-parties. The subject had a special value at that time, for it afforded the honest folk a space of ground upon which they might be agreeable, however much they might wrangle over the question of the Methven heir.

At Rowanden, the fishers, men and women, were every one on Teenie's side ; even the young fellows, who might have felt some envy in losing all hope of winning the prize themselves, joined her cause, and proclaimed her the bravest lady in the county. She would have been just the right sort of wife, they thought, for one of the old Norse kings, who used to sail the seas so bravely that the legends of their prowess stimulated the youths with courage, and inspired in them a fierce spirit of enterprise, which often told with good effect upon a night's fishing when storms rose dauntingly.

This scandal was very bad for the young minister, and he heard enough of it to make him smart keenly. Enthusiastic, earnest, seeing in the work he had undertaken great possibilities for the noblest efforts a man can make, the fact of being the subject of petty gossip was extremely disagreeable to him. That it was false afforded him little comfort, for he knew that a man entering upon grave duties, such as his were to be, would lose much of the influence he should possess if his name were bandied about as that of one who had acted perversely or foolishly, according to the world's estimate of conduct.

Skipper Dan had not yet made up his mind whether to be pleased or sorry. In his own way he grinned over the "clashes" which were going about. The marriage-day was fixed, the preparations for it were progressing steadily ; whatever folk might say—and folk would always say something—could not alter that fact.

Rough, uncouth giant that he was nobody could guess the woman's tenderness with which he regarded his child, and so nobody could understand that Dan was not thinking at all about the grand match his daughter was making, but only about the difference there would be at the Norlan' Head.

"She wishes for't," he kept muttering to himself ; that was the one idea he had grasped when first astounded by the Laird's consent, and he clung to it as if it were the only sure thing he could find.

As the day drew near, he thought much about the whaling expedition he proposed to make.

The only person who was thoroughly happy in the arrangements for the forthcoming event was Ailie. She was never done praising the old and the young Dalmahoy, and promising

to the bride a long and prosperous life. To her the preparations afforded a ventilation for much suppressed energy. The grand dresses and their trimmings were sources of great joy ; the "providing"—which is the bride's contribution to the effects of the future household, and in Scotland a most important affair, including linen, blankets, etc.—was to Ailie a supreme pleasure.

The woman was as vain and proud as if Teenie had been her own child ; and she was determined that Dan Thorston's lass should go to her husband with as extensive a providing as even the provost's daughter could hope to have. So from morning till night she was busy : pawky to those who might be expected to give presents ; extremely civil to those who brought them ; sharp and contemptuous to those who failed to pay this mark of respect.

Teenie looked on, helped a little, objected a great deal ; then laughed, and submitted.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BRIDAL EVE.

FEENIE was restless and inconstant, now singing as blithely as a bird, by-and-by silent, gloomy, and fretful—she did not know why. She was going to marry the only man she ever cared for—that made her happy. But, on the other hand, there were weary, vague forebodings, threatening her married life with sorrow—that made her sad and irritable. And she did not know why! She would not think of that silly book of fate about which Walter had seemed so vexed; she could not think that Grace had anything to do with this uncomfortable feeling, and she did not like to think that the Laird's blunder or the folk's clashes could be the cause of her uneasiness.

The Laird had said he would not attend the marriage, but being reminded of his guiding principle, he had half agreed to Walter, and was wholly decided in his own mind, to attend, in order to stifle gossip, and to have the opportunity of making a speech. He was always ready to sacrifice himself to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and he thoroughly believed that he was always doing so.

The Laird's family numbered four daughters and three sons. Their positions in the register of the family Bible stood in this order:—

Helen—Miss Burnett—age, something under forty. She was tall, had a long neck, a long head, and very sharp pinched-like features; very thin hair. She professed an utter contempt for matrimony; she was in fact almost viciously eager to be married under any circumstances. Whenever she heard of the marriage of any of those youths and maidens whom she had known as children, her customary exclamation was "How funny!" That was a general phrase of hers, uttered without the least meaning of tone or look, no matter how grave might be the subject of conversation. Indeed, she frequently con-

trived to startle people by using it on the most inappropriate occasions. She was beginning to feel that she must give up hope, and she fell back upon the consolatory thought that she had been too exacting in her earlier days, or that no man had appeared worthy to win her.

Alice—a giddy young thing of thirty-five, held in severe subjection by her elder sister, who deemed restraint necessary to save her from conduct which would be very foolish, if not wicked. Helen was very fond of her all the time she condemned her giddiness.

Agnes Mary—quiet and studious, disposed to deep depression of spirits, owing to religious fears, and self-doubts as to her acceptance amongst the elect.

Walter.

Jane—a dark, cheery little creature, who always saw the silver lining of every cloud.

Archibald—a sturdy fellow, who had studied agriculture, and was now a coffee planter at Ceylon.

Colin—a shy youth, who was spending a few months at home, previous to beginning work as clerk in a London bank.

The members of the family at home during this crisis were Miss Burnett, Alice, and Colin.

Miss Burnett at first positively refused to see the future bride but at length—whether yielding to natural curiosity, or to the tears and prayers of the “giddy young thing,” Alice, who was ready to hug and kiss and weep over anybody who was going to be married—she agreed to visit the Norlan’ Head, and her future sister-in-law.

“How funny! I suppose we must show some regard to this fisher-girl for poor Walter’s sake,” she said.

She always spoke of her brother as “poor” Walter.

Teenie received them civilly, but without the least pretence of affection, which was rather disappointing to Alice, who was prepared to go into ecstasies over her new relative, as she would have been over anything new—the stranger it might be, the greater would have been her delight.

“I am so glad to have a new sister,” she cried, embracing her.

But Teenie shrank back; Alice stood in dumb amazement

at her unsympathetic manner, and Miss Burnett exclaimed severely—

"Alice, you are much too demonstrative."

Alice recovered herself, and looking pleadingly at her sister—

"But she is so bonnie. I don't wonder at Walter being in love with her, and I shall be so fond of her."

Teenie felt a little annoyed, for they spoke of her as if she were some curiosity, or some wild animal exhibited for their entertainment.

"Can we do anything to assist you, Christina, in your arrangements?" said Helen, secretly eager to have some insight into the preparations of a young lady for the married state; and although the offer was made in her grimly polite way, she really meant it kindly.

"Oh! do let us help you," cried Alice; "I would like it so much."

"I see no way that you can help me," answered Teenie, smiling faintly, and blushing while her heart warmed towards Alice; "there is nothing to do."

"How funny!" ejaculated Helen, "I thought you would have been overwhelmed with so many things to do."

"What kind of a dress are you to wear?" asked Alice; "is it to be white?—and have you got any lace?—I am so fond of real lace."

"I don't know yet," answered the bride, disposed to laugh at this enthusiasm about a matter to which she had given little attention.

"Don't know yet!—oh, dear! what a strange body you must be. I have thought ever so many times of how I should be dressed, and how I should stand, and how I would answer the minister. I've gone over it in fancy a hundred times, and the only thing I have not been able to realize is the man. You see nobody wants to marry me."

"Don't talk nonsense," said Helen severely, having a fear that the credit of the Dalmahoy family was being sacrificed by her sister.

"But it isn't nonsense, Nellie, or I'd have been married half a dozen times at least."

"You are such a giddy young thing, Alice." That was the usual termination of their little disputes.

Teenie showed them her "braw" dresses, presents, and providing. Miss Burnett was dignified, but expressed gracious approval of all she saw. Alice was in ecstasies of admiration; she began to look upon Teenie with a humble kind of awe, as one who was about to pass into the perfect state of womanhood.

Both sisters left the house with a much higher opinion of their brother's bride than they had entertained previously. But Helen could not resist the temptation to be sily satirical when she selected as her gift a pair of fish-carvers.

Grace had been with her several times—not often; and yet she seemed to be always at hand when help or advice was needed—very quiet, gentle, and always with that smile which was all the more tender because of the shade of sorrow lying behind it. She seemed to be gradually winning Teenie to forget that story Walter had told her—to forget the peculiar position in which they stood towards each other and towards him.

Only there were quick flashes of Teenie's eyes upon the pale face of her friend when she thought the latter did not see, and these glances suggested that Teenie was not forgetting, but remembering the more acutely, the more the other's devotion was revealed to her.

The day previous to the marriage: afternoon. Grace and Ailie had persuaded Teenie to try on her wedding-dress (the first time), and she was standing in the middle of the little room, face flushed, eyes bright, heart beating quickly, and conscious of an uncomfortable feeling that she was far too grand.

"You look beautiful," said Grace simply.

"She does that," echoed Ailie, standing with arms crossed, and each hand clutching an elbow; "there's an auld fisher by-word that we say to lads when they're going to marry—

" 'Put your hand in the creel,
Get an adder or an eel'—

meaning that they'll get a wife that'll sting them, or one that will slip though their fingers; but Maister Walter will get just as braw a wife as he could wish for. But she's no right yet; she wants that bonnie sash you brought, Miss Wishart—where is it?"

"I left it down-stairs."

Ailie went off in search of it.

Teenie crossed the room, closed the door, and fastened it. Then she turned round, looking at Grace with such clear, honest eyes, but with an expression of distress in them.

"I'm no happy—I'm no content—I'll no be able to go on with it," she said agitatedly.

"With what?" exclaimed Grace, startled by her words and manner.

"You should have worn this dress," she went on rapidly, "the-morn should have been your wedding-day—not mine."

"Teenie!" (reproachfully).

"I say it again, it should have been yours, not mine. I cannot believe it's so near; I cannot believe that it's real. I've been waiting every day for something to happen that would break it off—I've been almost hoping something would happen."

"But why should you nope for that?"

"Because of you."

"Me!" Grace drew breath, then softly—"That's hard, Teenie."

"I did not mean to hurt you," was the impulsive cry of the girl; "I'm always doing what I don't want to do. I mean that you would have been better for him—that you are suffering; and you are so kind, and that makes it the worse."

Grace was very pale, but after the first moment of sharp pain and surprise, she was able to understand the passionate feeling which prompted the girl's words, and to sympathize with it. She was calm apparently. Two steps brought her close to Teenie; she reached up her hand, and rested it on the girl's shoulder.

"I will not seek to hide from you, Teenie, that you have pained and vexed me; but it is just as well that we should speak out to each other at once, because I want you to be my friend, as I want to be yours, and we cannot be real friends so long as there is any doubt between us. You have been thinking about me, and you have forgotten Walter."

"I wish I could forget him, it would be easy enough then to run away from all this fuss and worry."

"Well, you see that you care so much for him, that you can-

not run away from him" (laughing good-naturedly), "and so you are very cruel to him when you think he ought to marry somebody he does not care for."

"But he does care for you."

"I hope so, but not in the same way he cares for you."

"And you like him."

"Yes, very much, and always will."

"And I come between you, and vex you and his father, and all his folk, and by-and-by he will be sorry too."

"You must not say that—and you must not think that; if you were to leave him now, I could not accept a man who I knew wanted somebody else to be his wife. You would not do that?"

"No."

"Very well; and I, thinking of his happiness, like him well enough to be able to say, 'Marry Teenie whom you love, and I am content.'"

"I could not say that, and if I did say it I would be sorry after; will not you?"

Grace was taken aback by the directness of the question, and she began to feel her patience a little exhausted.

"I cannot answer for my future feelings; but I promise that you shall not be disturbed by them."

"I am sorry I have vexed you," said Teenie, beginning to take off her dress, "but it has been a sore trouble to me to feel that I have come between you and him, and that I have angered all his folk."

"You must think of him, Teenie, and not of others."

"I'll try."

They parted—an eager desire for friendship on both sides, and yet both conscious of something which rendered perfect trust and confidence in each other almost impossible.

Teenie threw aside her wedding-dress, and put on her ordinary gown. She went out, despite Ailie's desire to try the effect of the new sash; and seeing Dan, she called to him—

"Come, father, I'm going for a sail; maybe it's the last we'll have together."

The skipper followed her down to the bay. She shouldered an oar, and marched over to the cobble. The tide was high, and the boat was floating. She sprang in, and used the oar

manfully to push out from the shore. They passed from the sheltering arms of the bay, and the prow of the boat swung round to the tide. She shipped the oar, and leaning over the gunwale, her hands caught the waves at every dip of the boat.

The skipper stood up against the mast, arranging the sail, and the red rays of the setting sun fell aslant the boat, crimsoning her face, and the water where her hands touched it. Above were great mountains, with bright copper peaks and borders; in the west, the sun, a ball of fire touching the top of the Grampians; around them, the cold green sea, chequered with brilliant red lakes. The keen gusts of wind, and the plashing of the waters, rendered the stillness of the evening more palpable.

A boat passed them slowly, sailing into the harbour of Rowanden. Its occupants were three girls and two youths; they had been out at Davies Bay, seeking mussels for bait. The girls were singing a song common among the fisher-lasses, to a slow tune which kept time with the rise and fall of the boat:—

“Oh, gin I was married!
I’ve a’ thing weel preparéd,
* * * * *
“I’ve sax new chairs and a table,
A guid kail-pot and a ladle,
A braw new bed, and a cradle
To rock some wee body in.”

The voices of the singers were mellowed by the wind and sea, and the commonplace character of the words was lost in the beauty of the surrounding scene.

The boat floated on, the voices faded away in the distance, and Teenie suddenly raised her head.

“I wish I was like them, father.”

“What for?”

“They are so happy and content.”

“Well, what should hinder you being the same?”

“I don’t know; but I am not the same.”

She was thinking what a simple life these girls had before them; to mend the sails and nets, to get plenty of mussels for bait, to have something tasty for the guid-man when he came home, and to see him safe in from a stormy night’s fishing—that

was all their care. With the usual blindness of people who wish to be something else than what they are, she did not think of the times when their guid-man did not come home safe from the storm, but some friend appeared with the news that the boat and crew and nets were all lost. She saw only the shadows of her own position, and did not balance them against those of others.

"Can we no sail out, father, and sail on across the water, and never come back any more?" she said, her hands playing fondly with the waves.

"What are you hawering at?" exclaimed Dan, amazed and puzzled by this whimsical humour.

"I want to get away to see the far countries and the strange sights you have told me about."

"You're a woman, and you're gaun to be married the-morn."

Dan mentioned that fact as an infallible remedy for all absurd fancies.

"I wish I was a man."

"What better would you be?"

She did not reply. The boat rose and fell lightly with the waves, which gurgled merrily against the prow as it cut its way forward. The sun dropped behind the distant hills, and in the gloaming the face of the water changed to dark green, and deepened in colour as the light faded. The copper clouds became black, and floated threateningly overhead. A distant sail crossed the horizon; a steamer, with its long-tailed comet of smoke passed far out at sea. The lights of Kingshaven glimmered upon the water, and the lamps of the white tower showed brilliantly in the darkening night.

Teenie felt happy; the exhilarating breeze, the surge of the sea, the motion of the boat, and the solitude were very pleasant to her. They cleared her head, and made her forget all the petty doubts, which had been afflicting her; they soothed the restlessness which had disturbed and frightened her.

She passed to the stern swift and steadily. Dan was steering and minding the sail at the same time. She "couried" ("knelt" scarcely expresses the movement) down at his knees, and peering up into his face in the uncertain light, she whispered—

"Are you sorry about the-morn, father? Will you miss me when I'm away from the Norlan'?"

He dropped the rudder, and the rope with which he managed the sail; he gripped her by the arms, and the big frame of the man shook with emotion.

"My bairn!" he said hoarsely, "it's like rugging the heart out o' me to let you go; but you wish it."

"Then I'll not go."

"Havers!" he growled fiercely, catching up the rope and the rudder again; and, utterly ashamed of his own brief display of weakness, he was ready to be angry with her. "We'se baith gang to the bottom if ye dinna take tent. We'll gang in now."

She rested her head upon his knee and did not speak. Occasionally his rough hand touched her brow, and passed through her hair tenderly, whilst the waves plashed against the boat and the wind whistled in their ears.

They sailed into the bay safely in the dark.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE MARRIAGE.

IT had been agreed that everything was to be very quiet—no crowd, no strangers and no fuss at the marriage. So the only guests were the members of the Dalmahoy family, the minister, and two friends of Thorston's,—the one an extensive fish-curer, the other a ship-owner—both having business relations with their host.

But Dan could not allow the event to pass without making some sign to his friends in the village ; so he had arranged for a substantial dinner at the inn, where the lads and lasses might eat and drink, and then “shak’ their foot”—that is dance, until they were tired—in honour of the occasion.

Rowanden was deeply interested. The fisherwives and daughters felt that a special honour was being paid to them in the marriage of Dan Thorston’s lass to the Laird’s son ; and the men were not behindhand in self-satisfaction.

A number of flags were hoisted in various directions, and the boats in the bay were similarly decorated. There was a very hearty desire to pay respect to the skipper—as well as to his daughter—who had been so long regarded by the simple community as a kind of chief. Work was struck for the day ; and even if Dan had given the most unmistakeable signs that there would be a “good shot,” not a man would have gone out on Teenie’s marriage-day.

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm in the village, everything was to be done quietly at the house.

Ailie was glorious in a silk gown—the first she had ever possessed ; and she had never dreamed of such wild extravagance, but Walter had presented it to her—and a new white cap, the voluminous frills of which shook with her intense enjoyment. The skipper was brilliant in a blue coat with brass buttons, and he was too much occupied by the many matters requiring his attention, to have time for regrets of any kind.

The sun was shining grandly on sea and land ; there was not a cloud to shadow the happiness of the party.

Miss Burnett was arrayed in the latest fashion from Edinburgh. She was dignified and condescending, and young as ever. Alice was younger still and quite playful in the delight with which she occupied the position of bridesmaid. Grace Wishart was rather pale, but quiet and helpful ; several confused arrangements were put into order by her and nobody knew there had been anything wrong. She was principal bridesmaid ; and of all those who wished the bride a happy future, none did so with more fervour than Grace.

Teenie was very silent, often looking at Grace, but showing no nervousness ; she rather displayed that kind of defiance under which people sometimes hide great agitation.

Walter was grave, as if he were sensible of the serious responsibilities upon which he was about to enter. His brother, Colin Burnett, was the "best man," and he was as cool as if he had served an apprenticeship to marriage ceremonies.

The Laird came in the carriage, was received with loud cheers by some loons who had gathered about the doors, and he was gratified. He entered the house, and was somewhat disappointed at the smallness of the company, although he had himself agreed that things ought to be done quietly, and although he saw that the little parlour was pretty well crowded as it was. He was, however, magnanimous as usual, and waived all objections of his own in consideration for the majority.

Mr. Hutcheson, the minister of Kingshaven—a bald-headed and long-bearded gentleman, who had seen much of the world, and had settled down here for the sake of retirement and leisure, which he did not find—performed the ceremony.

"Do you take this woman to be your wedded wife ?"

"Yes," said Walter very decisively.

"Do you take this man to be your wedded husband ?"

"Yes," answered Teenie firmly, and almost as if her teeth clenched upon the word to give it emphasis, indicating that all doubt and hesitation were at an end from that moment.

Then came the prayer and the exhortation, the signing of the register and the "marriage lines," which were handed to Teenie, and it was all over. How little there seemed to be to do ! What a brief space it occupied, and yet what a difference

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it made ! There stood the bride and the groom bound to each other—for life.

Teenie did not know any difference ; she felt a little shy and a little anxious, but she was just the same now as she had been half an hour ago ; and yet there was the man standing beside her who claimed the devotion of all her future years.

“How funny !” exclaimed Miss Burnett.

“It’s so nice,” said Alice, “and so simple—I wish somebody would marry me.”

“I salute you, Mistress Walter Burnett,” said the Laird, kissing her.

“Faith, I’ll do the same,” cried Colin, who, in right of his position as groomsman, kissed the bride.

“It’s beautiful !” cried Alice laughing.

Teenie rather shrank from these marks of favour, and she looked at Walter—her husband ; she felt timid as she thought of that, and wondered if there ever could be any mysterious authority which he should exert over her, that would make her feel indifferent to her father, and to all the old associations.

“Dear wife,” whispered Walter, putting his arm around her in the presence of all the folk.

“Toots !” she cried, and sprang away from him.

The carriage was waiting for them : they were to spend the first few days of their new life in Edinburgh, and they were to drive to the Kingshaven station. They made a pretence of eating somewhat of the substantial lunch which Ailie had prepared, and then took their places in the carriage.

They were surrounded by a crowd of the fishers, their wives, and daughters, who had come up to the house in spite of the skipper’s injunctions, and hailed the bride and bridegroom with loud cheers and blessings. Habbie Gowk rode through the crowd on his donkey, much flushed, and much more excited than was apparently necessary even on this occasion. Most surprising of all, he had none of his ballads in his hand.

“Wish you joy, sir—wish you joy, mem,” he said somewhat thickly, but with a peculiar assumption of familiarity, and with even a degree of patronage, which was extraordinary in him, whose good-nature generally extinguished every thought of self ; “and you may wish me joy, too, for what do you think——”

He paused, not for a reply, but to give greater effect to his words.

"What do you think?" he cried looking all around him proudly, and then nodding to the Laird. "It'll please you to ken, sir, as it will my friends here, Lawyer Currie has just tellt me that *I* am the heir to the Methven fortune; and I am gaun to gi'e the biggest present of any to Thorston's lass."

There were astonishment and laughter at this half-drunken announcement. Then cheers, blessings, and old shoes showered upon the newly-married couple, as the horses moved slowly through the crowd.

"Hurray!" for Dan Thorston's lass, for the Laird, for his son, and for the Methven heir, as the missiles flew after the carriage, and guns were fired, and everybody was wild with delight. That was how they managed things quietly.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE DIVERSION.

THE fishers gave one grand cheer for all the bonnie ladies of Dalmahoy and Craigburn, which was acknowledged with smiles and gracious bows—Miss Burnett crying in high falsetto, “Oh, how funny!”—Alice clapping her hands in ecstasy, and begging to be allowed to follow the folk wherever they were going.

Then the crowd moved off in an irregular procession toward the inn. Habbie Gowk led the way, bestriding Beattie with a jauntier air than ever the provost himself displayed when whirling along in his carriage and lamps. He was followed by a group of youths and maidens—the former in loose blue trousers, coloured shirts, and sparkling neckerchiefs; the latter in blue or red striped petticoats, little tartan shawls worn with a certain coquettish grace, and bare heads—hair plaited in cunning bands, or rolled up in the familiar knot at the back, and tied with a bit of bright ribbon. They were singing the “Boatie Rows” in capital marching time, arms linked in arms, bodies and steps swinging to the tune. The next group were busy “daffing” (jesting), and hauling each other about from one side of the road to the other in a wild way.

“Let me be,” cries strapping Peg Johnstone, as a stalwart young fisher gripes her round the waist, and kisses her without the least regard to observation. She whirls herself good-humouredly out of his grasp into the arms of another swain.

“Do you no wish it was your wadding, Jean?” says Gleyed (Squinting) Tam, leering at the bright girl beside him.

“Deed do I, so bein’s it was the lad I wanted,” replies Jean frankly.

“Wouldna I do for you?”

“Whan you ha’e gotten rid o’ your gleyed e’e, and whan you’re skipper o’ twa boats, speir then,” says the quean, with that characteristic frankness which would be accounted rude-

neg^r elsewhere, but which here only provoked a hearty laugh at the expense of the lad.

He took it in good part, and, joining in the laugh—

"The boats I'll manage, but what has a gleyed e'e to do wi' 't?"

"I would never ken when you was looking at another lass, and when at me."

"Oh, but you would make my e'en grow straight, they would sit so steady on you."

"Will you sweer to that?"

"I'll try," was the somewhat cautious answer.

"When's your day to be, Tibbie?" says Tak'-it-easy Davie, reputed to be the laziest fellow in Rowanden.

He left his patch of garden entirely untended one season; but it happened that in the previous year he had so carelessly "lifted" (dug up) his "tatties" that he had left more than enough in the ground to form seed for the coming season. Consequently, without having put a spade in the ground, he had an excellent crop of potatoes. The neighbours were amazed; but Tak'-it-easy Davie simply observed, "There's naething lost by laziness." Another of his sayings was, "Procrastination is the mother of invention!"

To his question, Tibbie, a somewhat dowdy girl, with a rather severe expression, replied—

"My day?—the-morn come never."

"That's a long while."

"Is't—but tnaugh, it's nae longer than when you'll bring hame a guid shot."

"That's because the shot turns out as the Lord wills, guid or bad."

"You lippen ower muckle to the Lord's will, Davie, and do ower little yoursel'."

"It'll no be sae wi' you, Tibbie, if you're to get a man—you'll ha'e to do a heap for yoursel'."

The girl tossed her head, cast a look of scorn upon the jiber, and pushed her way forward into pleasanter company.

The groups which followed were composed of older but not a whit sedater folk. Sturdy matrons whose backs had become bent with years of creel-bearing—creels full of fish to sell to the farmers roundabout, or creels full of mussels for bait, carried up

from the rocks and sands of distant bays, and then patiently "sheeled" (taken out of the shell) for the guidman—were as brisk and merry on this day as if they had travelled backward in the path of years, and found themselves young and marriageable again.

The jokes were not quite so simple or quite so modest as those of the younger folk; the elders were bolder, and ventured on many coarsenesses which an unwedded lad or lass dared not have uttered. The freedom was not vicious, however; it was thoroughly good-natured, and it was mingled with serious discussion as to the price of fish and of provisions generally, with sad references to the loss of tackle on the fishing stations, a grumble at the water-bailies, or at the deficiencies of the harbour, and an occasional exclamation of good wishes for the couple whose bridal they had met to celebrate.

As the last of the crowd descended the hill, Skipper Dan turned to the Laird.

"You might come down and see the folk at their diversion," he said; "it would please them, and it'll do you nae ill."

"With pleasure," exclaimed Dalmahoy; "it is one of my greatest delights and privileges to share in the amusements and daily concerns of the people."

So when the ladies had been satisfactorily settled in the gigs—Grace drove herself—and had started homeward, the Laird and the skipper, Colin and the minister, proceeded to join the fishers at the inn. Ailie followed, after hastily putting things a little to rights in the cottage.

The scene was homely; it was made bright and happy by the spirit of thorough enjoyment which prevailed. The pleasure of the moment was the dominant power in every heart, and voices were loud and faces were full of smiles.

A long room—or rather two rooms in one, for a wooden partition had been removed for the occasion—was divided by a long table, which was laden with huge rounds of roast and boiled beef, greens and potatoes, and a favourite dish known as "scratch" (chopped potatoes boiled with suet, and mixed with oatmeal); bottles of whiskey side by side with bottles of "sma' yull"—a thin pungent liquor, very different from the washy stuff generally sold as common beer. The order of drinking was to take a glass of whiskey neat, and to wash it down with half

a tumblerful of the ale. The most frequent demand at the inn was "half a mutchkin" (of whiskey) and a bottle of sma' yull.

The room had a low roof crossed by strong beams. The walls were covered with a dingy brown paper splashed with flowers, which had been once brilliant yellow and scarlet, but were now oppressively dull. Above the mantelpiece was a painting—"The Port of London." It was a busy scene, crowded with ships and smacks, all nicely balanced one on top of the other, and looking as if in imminent danger of toppling over. The sky was a rich washing-blue, the water streaky blue and white. But the genius of the artist had been concentrated upon one grand effect, the representation of a man standing up in a small boat, his shadow reflected in the water. It was wonderful how he stood on his head, for you saw as much in the water as out of it, of the man, the boat, and the oar, which nobody held (the man had no doubt dropped it when he stood up to display the shadow); the whole suggested that the artist, moved by an inspiration, had turned the canvas upside down, and so produced this marvellous effect.

There was another picture, an old engraving of Buckingham Palace—the glass broken, so that the paper was black with dust. The walls were further ornamented with the glaring show-cards of different brewers, indicating that there was no partiality on the part of the landlord. The ale which he supplied was from a local brewer, who had no show-card; but it was very good ale for all that.

Places were scrambled for and taken without the least regard to precedence, except that certain lads wanted to be beside certain lasses, and that the skipper, Dalmahoy, and the minister occupied the head of the table, whilst Habbie Gowk took his seat at the foot, thus electing himself croupier, or vice-chairman of the feast.

One ruddy-faced dame, who felt weak after the excitement of the previous proceedings, helped herself to a glass of whiskey, muttering at the same time—

"Whatsoever we eat or drink, may we do it all to the glory of——"

She swallowed the remainder of the sentence and the contents of the glass. She was perhaps a little hypocritical, but she

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was not in the least ribald in asking a blessing upon her dram ; mere habit had more to do with it than anything else.

The minister asked a blessing—he had discretion enough to be brief—and the company proceeded to pay the highest compliment to their host by eating with good appetite, and with much relish, if somewhat noisily.

"Choots, man ! your fingers are a' thumbs—gi'e me the knife," cried Red Sandy, snatching the carver out of the hands of the young fisher, whose mind was too much occupied with Peg Johnstone to permit him to pay proper heed to the joint before him.

Half a dozen smart girls waited at the table, and the guests helped themselves so freely that they were speedily served.

"Gie's a whang o' see here," was the most frequent exclamation, and the business of eating progressed rapidly, amid much clatter of knives and plates and palates.

The eating finished, steaming toddy was served round in yellow jugs. Glasses were filled, and there was a general health-drinking, which necessitated the rapid and repeated filling of the glasses—much to the satisfaction of the company.

"Here's to ye, skipper," shouts Habbie from the foot of the table, adding with the air of a man who felt that he was the equal of any other, if not better, "and here's to you, Laird—and to you, minister ; may nane o' us ever see a waur day than this."

That was a toast in which everybody joined very heartily.

"And here's to the new minister o' Drumliemount, and the bonnie lass he's married," cries Habbie again, pleased with any opportunity to refill his glass ; "may they ha'e many bairns, and never ken an empty pot or a cauld hearthstone."

There was great enthusiasm at this, and sly interchanges of the sentiment between the lads and lasses at the table. The skipper nodded and drank, looking pleased. The Laird felt that it was incumbent upon him to say something, and he rose to his feet.

"What's wrang noo ?" whispered several voices.

"Whisht ! the Laird's going to gi'e us a toast," answered others ; and there was silence.

The Laird cleared his throat, and was distinctly heard in

every corner of the room. He spoke with much suavity, a little becoming hesitation, and with some degree of gracious condescension to equality, behind which lay a sense of personal superiority that nothing could affect.

The present was an occasion of very great importance to him, and of very deep interest. In the first place, his son had that day gone through the most solemn and most binding ceremony of life—in fact, he had been married, and married to the most charming and most winning girl in the county, the daughter of his good friend Thorston. (Boisterous cheers and Hear, hears.) Although his own conduct in this matter had been somewhat severely criticised—nay, condemned by certain members of his family—

"Never heed, Laird, you'll get ower 't," cried Tak'-it-easy Davie, with approving patronage.

The Laird smiled and bowed.

He had no doubt that he would get over it ; indeed, he was sure he had got over it, for he hoped—nay, he believed—that the people of Rowanden, whom he had had the pleasure of feasting with on this auspicious day, and whom he had now the pleasure of addressing—he believed that they would regard his conduct in this affair as another of the many proofs he had given that he trusted and respected the People, and that he adhered firmly to the principle with which he had begun his career—of the usefulness of which they were the best judges—that the greatest happiness of the greatest number ought to be the ruling thought of all action, social or political, public or private.

There was vast enthusiasm evoked by this noble sentiment ; the cheers and the clatter, and clinking of glasses, were loud and prolonged.

"He speaks like a book," observed Muckle Will Johnstone, and his comrades echoed his commendation.

The Laird was profoundly gratified, and proceeded with even more satisfaction than he had begun with.

"Thank you, my good friends all ; but I must say something which will displease you, because it tells against yourselves—or rather against human nature generally."

"Let's hear't, let's hear't," was the general cry.

"Well, you know that I disapprove of class distinctions

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(Hear, hear), and especially of that distinction which is broadly indicated by the words Rich and Poor. What are riches? What is poverty? The honest man is rich although he may not have a penny; the dishonest man is poor although he possess millions!"

"I'm no sure but I'd like to be the dishonest one in siccan a case," muttered Davie.

"Whisht!" growled his neighbour; and Dalmahoy went on.

"Now, what is it makes a man—or woman—really rich or poor? Why, the possession or the want of happiness! Life is a mere question of happiness, and whatever makes us happy makes us rich. We have ourselves to blame, then, if we are not rich. What makes us unhappy but selfish envy—the bitterness with which we question the right of others to more wealth or pleasure than we possess? 'What right have they,' we cry, 'to more than us? Why, indeed, should not the positions be reversed?'—which is, in fact, what we desire. We do not envy those who have less than us—we do not suffer any pangs at sight of them. I have seen the millionaire rolling along in his carriage, and envying the sturdy peasant in the field—but it is his wealth of health that he grudges him. 'What right has this fellow,' he cries, 'to a sound digestion and steady nerves, when I am as I am?' The peasant pretty generally returns the compliment, and grudges the poor millionaire the fine dinners which he cannot eat. We rarely thank Heaven for being as we are. When the fit of gratitude is upon us, we only say, 'Thank Heaven we are no worse than we are!'"

He made a deliberate pause, and there was a hesitating cheer, as if the folk were doubtful whether or not he was making fun of them, or preaching to them, which was quite as bad.

"My desire has always been to make people happy," the Laird resumed, "and that is why I have turned a deaf ear to the objections already alluded to, and that is why, sinking all distinctions, I gave my willing consent to the marriage which has been celebrated this day. I hope and pray that the result will be a happy one for all parties concerned. (Loud cheers and 'So say we.') I drink your health, ladies and gentlemen, good matches for all the bonnie lassies I see before me, and a good fishing season to all."

The speech was a great success, and the Laird discreetly determined to leave at the moment when he was most popular. As he made his way out, amidst loud and hearty congratulations, he halted beside Habbie, and said in an undertone, but quite carelessly—

"I would like to see you up at Dalmahoy, Habbie. I have some interest in this Methven business, and if you are the heir——"

"If I am the heir!—there's nae doubt about it, Laird. Writer Currie told me, and gi'ed me two pounds erls to let him take up the case for me, and you ken he's no like to part wi' siller for nothing. There's no a doubt o't; and I'm to get out a volume o' my poems on the strength o't."

That had long been Habbie's favourite dream and ambition—to see his vagrant sheets neatly bound up in blue and gold—preserved for posterity!—to look at the volume in the windows and on the counters of the book-shops—to hear the folk speaking about it—to know that they were looking at him as somebody "by-ordinar"—and to read the notices in the papers. Ah, it was worth coming into a fortune for that! So cried the simple vanity of the man.

"Put me down for half a dozen copies," said the Laird; "but I'll be glad to see you any time about the Methven affair. I may be able to help you."

"Sang about noo," was the general cry, on the departure of Dalmahoy.

"Come awa', Habbie; gie's a new skirl," says Ailie.

The poet sang "Cuttie's Wedding," in a somewhat cracked voice, but with a geniality which covered all deficiencies. Every word was associated by the audience with the event of the day, and the rollicking chorus which followed each verse was taken up vigorously and loudly, in tune and out of tune, bodies swaying to the rhythm of words and air.

"Now then, Tibbie, let's ha'e the 'Flowers o' the Forest,'" commanded Habbie, it being his privilege to call for the next song.

"Man, I'm that herse, there's no a sang in my thrapple."

"Take a dram, and that'll clear the pipes."

She did so, saying at the same time—

"Shut your e'en, neighbours, and you'll no hear me."

She knew very well that she was accounted one of the best singers in the village, and so she could make pretences which would have been mercilessly ridiculed if made by any less favoured one.

The song went round. Muckle Jean Houston—a man in stature and muscle—had a harsh voice and no sense of tune, but she obeyed the order of the day, and sang “My Love’s awa’ for a Sodger”—a very pathetic ballad, which was not altogether spoiled even by her voice.

It was Tak’-it-easy Davie’s turn next.

“I canna sing,” he said.

“You’ll ha’e to sing or tell a story,” shouted Habbie authoritatively.

Davie’s eyes danced with fun.

“I canna sing,” he repeated; “but if I maun tell a story, I’ll just say that I would like to hear Muckle Jean sing that sang over again.”

Muckle Jean threatened him with her fist; and Davie kept out of her way for a week afterwards.

The tables were removed, or thrust into corners, in order to make room for a dance. Habbie got his fiddle, and whilst he was scraping and screwing it into tune, partners were chosen for the reel. Ailie was amongst the first on her feet; the old woman looked as if she had grown young again, so light and firm were her movements.

“Come awa’, Wilkie,” she said to a hoary-bearded giant, who had been steadily and silently applying himself to the toddy-jug; “your mistress says ye’ve grown a stiff-kneed old sot; but I never saw ye leave a boat’s christening or a wedding, without letting the young folk see how ye could shak’ your foot, and you’ll surely no be ahinhand at the wedding o’ Thorston’s lass. Come awa’; let the wife see that you’re no sae useless as she thinks.”

“I’ll dance the Reel o’ Tulloch wi’ ony ane in the room,” said Wilkie, with the gravity of a precentor on his trial. “I’ll do’t on the table there wi’ a’ the glasses standing—I ha’e done’t many a time.”

“I ken’d there was go in you yet.”

The old man got up solemnly, balanced himself, and then took his place in the reel.

Habbie struck up "Miss Johnstone," and away went the dozen sets with lusty "Hoochs?" and nimble legs. The animation and enthusiasm would have made a sick man well. Old Wilkie forgot his rheumatism, and danced like a youth, whilst Ailie was as fresh as she had been in her teens.

Habbie changed rapidly into the "Marquis of Huntley," "Tulloch," "Bob o' Fettercairn," "Miss Parkes," and "Brechin Castle;" and at each change the reel became more furious, the voices louder, the springs higher, and the general action wilder and more reckless.

And so the fun goes on until twelve o'clock; then the "hood-sheaf," or parting glass, is served round—to keep out the cold; all join hands and sing "Auld Lang Syne," most of the singers regretting that the diversion is over, and that the round of work and worry begins again. Those who are able to walk home, do so; those who are not, are assisted by their friends.

Several lads and lasses dated from that day the beginning or the conclusion of their wooing. Half a dozen weddings took place within a month.

CHAPTER XXII.

OLD LETTERS.

GRACE WISHART was sitting in her room by the fireless grate ; on a little table by her side was a lamp, and an open desk, the contents of which were tossed about in a confused way, very unlike the orderly owner.

She was still in the dress she had worn at the marriage ; her hair, long and luxuriant, had been loosened, and was hanging over her shoulders and down her back ; her elbows rested on her knees, and in her hand she held a bundle of letters.

They were Walter Burnett's letters ; innocent enough in all conscience, beginning with the rude school-boy scrawl, in which he had asked her to help him in some trick or out of some scrape ; passing into a less distinct but more decisive form during his studies in Edinburgh, whence he wrote descriptions of his college-life and friends ; then developing into serious expressions of his faith, opinions, and hopes of the great work he might be able to do. There were many words of affection in the letters, but not a word more than a brother might have written to a sister. Yet she had magnified the value of those words, and treasured them. She had been made aware of her mistake, and still she had preserved the letters. He had not thought of asking for them—he valued them so little ; that was hard upon her who valued them so much. But, inconsistently, she was glad he had not asked for them ; she wished to keep them as the tokens of an old and very sweet dream. She had thought more than once of destroying them ; she felt that it ought to be done ; and yet the old dream lived so much in her heart that she found it very difficult to sacrifice these memorials of it.

To-day she had resolved that the sacrifice must be made—for her own sake, if for no better reason, in order to remove all palpable sign that the realisation of the dream had once been her brightest prospect. She thought that it was wrong to keep

these letters now, unless Teenie had given her permission ; and for that, of course, she would never be able to ask. With a sore heart she gathered them together, determined to burn them.

She looked over them for the last time, and cried. A word here, a line there, bore such a different meaning now from the interpretation she had put upon it long ago. Strange, that the same words could assume such different shapes. They were very precious to her, notwithstanding, and she lingered over them tenderly. Then she remembered that the man was Teenie's husband, and she placed them in the grate—very fondly, as a mother might lay a dead child in its coffin. She set her teeth and lips close, struck a match, and applied it to the papers.

How slow they are to ignite—how they resist the efforts to destroy them, as if they were possessed of life, and accused her of ingratitude base and cruel !—so she thinks. How often they overcome the fire, and lie with blackened edges, twittering into silence, their scarred faces appealing for redemption !

But she must be resolute. No mercy ; the command has been given ; they are doomed. She separates them—shakes them apart ruthlessly, and applies the light again. A bright flame shoots up, as if, grown spiteful and angry, those voices of so many pleasures and pains had resolved to meet their fate. Now a wrathful twittering, and through the flame the black and white films shape themselves into the familiar face she loved so well, suggesting memories of the dear hopes now dispelled, of golden visions now proved vain.

She stirs the ashes, and still some fragment with dark brown centre, branching off to black and rugged edges, shows a word, or part of a word, scarcely legible, yet how suggestive of days and thoughts which trouble the memory, in spite of this effort to annihilate them all !

She turns away with a sigh, and would fain forget. The ashes will be swept up by the house-maid, and disappear in the dusthole ; the memories will linger and recur at unexpected corners of life, filling the soul with sweet and bitter reflections.

Grace was a long time looking at the white ashes in the grate. Life seemed to her at that moment very hard—it seemed to be spent in getting out of one trouble into another ;

a year of sorrow for a moment's pleasure appeared to be the condition under which she existed. She wondered if it were different with others ; how sad they must be if they were like her !

But having made the sacrifice, she was not going to mope or whine over it—she disliked people who whined and wasted life in wishing that the moon were green cheese, and that they might have it to eat. She liked people to take things just as they found them, and to do cheerfully whatever they felt to be right and best under the circumstances.

She meant to do so, she was determined to do so, but fate had been very hard upon her, and it was not easy to submit to its decrees in her case without some cry of pain. She had felt that it was right to release Walter from his engagement ; and she knew that, having done so, it was also right and best that she should love Teenie, and try to make her happy. But although she tried to do all this with a cheerful face, she could not help the sad heart. One knows so much more than can be realized ; the path may be very straight and clear before us, and yet difficult to take, when it compels us to turn away from all that is dearest to us.

Well, she had made one step forward in the new path ; she had burned the letters, and so destroyed all material sign of the old life and the old dreams. She must turn away from them altogether ; and still she lingered over them, stirring the filmy ashes, and wondering if *he* would ever think, or ever understand, how very much she had sacrificed in order to insure his happiness according to his wishes. Would he ever think of the old time when she had been his promised wife ? Would he ever regret that he had chosen another ?

But this was altogether wrong and wicked. He was now Teenie's husband, and she must not even think of him otherwise than as a brother, and of Teenie as a sister—all the dearer because there was the danger of regarding her as the cause of the present suffering, and of hating her for it.

That was the theory of the position ; but then weak woman's nature asserted itself, and poor Grace cried herself to sleep because the moon was not made of green cheese, and she could not have it to eat. There is such a difference between seeing what we ought to do and doing it.

She got up in the morning, however, quite resolved upon following the path before her, humbly and bravely, without ever casting a look behind, or ever giving a thought to what might have been, if she could help it. There were duties enough for her to attend to, and, perhaps, more zeal in discharging them would prevent her thinking about the past, and so help to cure the wound which Walter had caused.

She attended to her mother's comforts first, as usual; and then she went out to see some of her pensioners in the village. Her first visit was paid to Buckie Willie, who had been lying for some weeks under the affliction of acute rheumatism, and cursing fiercely all the time in his pain. The dram was the only thing which gave him relief, so he declared; he scoffed at medicine and blisters, and kept calling for the dram in the intervals of his swearing at the pangs with which he was visited.

He controlled himself to some extent when Grace appeared, and endeavoured to show his respect for her by restraining the oaths with which he saluted each pang. She had brought brandy; a dose was administered to him—a very moderate dose, he thought—and he declared himself so much better that he would like another, to be made quite well.

Grace promised the second dose by-and-by, and he submitted—until she should go away; but the pain seized him again.

"I'm sorry to see you suffering so much still, Willie," she said in her sweet voice.

"Suffer!—it's no possible that—ye ken the place—can be waur nor this. I'd be glad to try."

"Hush!"

She could not help smiling, although she was shocked.

Buckie Willie composed his features into a seriously calm expression.

"Noo, what *could* the Lord mean when He invented rheumatics?" he said quite gravely.

"Like other ills of life, Willie, to chasten us."

"Chasten us!—it's a heap more like to make deevils o' us! When the Lord made rheumatics to chasten us, it's a pity He didna lea us how to appreciate it."

"You must not speak that way, Willie, or I shall not come to see you again."

She was startled by the fierceness and irreligious exclamations of the man.

"You maun forgi'e me," he groaned; "it's no easy to mind the carritchers wi' the rheumatics stanging me in this way. Say you'll forgi'e me, Miss Wishart, and I'll try to be quiet, though it's no easy."

He clenched his teeth in the bitter effort to restrain his cries of pain, and she granted her forgiveness. How strangely like her own suffering was this, although expressed in different fashion !

CHAPTER XXIII.

* WAITING.

GRACE went on to a cottage at the upper end of the village. It stood a little apart from the others, and everything about it was singularly trim—too trim; there was a want of life in the exceeding orderliness of the place. It seemed as if no foot had crossed the threshold since it had been cleaned; no voice or face indicated that the cottage was inhabited. From the door or window there was a clear view of the harbour bar, the lighthouse, and a long reach of sea.

She lifted the latch and entered, her foot leaving a mark upon the sand which covered the stone step at the door. There was the same painful trimness inside as out; everything rigidly fixed in its place, everything polished and shining with almost obtrusive cleanliness.

A woman of about fifty, in a neat grey dress, her white hair plaited like a girl's, and not covered by the cap generally worn by women of her years, advanced to meet the visitor with a quiet, pleased smile.

"You are very kind, Miss Wishart, to come and see me so often."

"It's a pleasure to me, Mysie; how do you feel yourself now?"

There was a strangely subdued and submissive smile on Mysie's calm face, which was still bonnie, and had been bonnier.

"About my usual; nothing to complain of, and nothing to boast about. Will you not take a seat?"

Grace took the chair, and entered into a general conversation with Mysie about the ailments, losses, and successes of the fishers. Mysie was one of the ablest nurses, and always ready to help her neighbours, whilst in the big houses roundabout her assistance was frequently sought in cases of illness. Her

peculiarities were known and respected ; her retired mode of life, and her fancies about the house she occupied, were never alluded to in her presence. It was said that she was "some crack," but there was no sign of madness in her gentle manner, and her devotion to any of the neighbours who might be in trouble was certainly a most benevolent form of insanity.

Thirty years ago, Mysie, then a bright-eyed, handsome girl, married her cousin Bob Keith. There was not a gentler, shyer girl in the village than Mysie, and there was not a more good-natured or more rollicking fellow than her husband. He had a brother, Alick Keith, who was skipper of a schooner engaged in the Baltic trade, and was reputed to be the most daring seaman ever known—he would sail upon a Friday ! He would defy all storm signals, and all presages of bad weather or an unlucky voyage. Once a strange dove, weary and starved, had settled upon his bowsprit, coming from nobody knew where, and although his men implored him to put back into harbour, he refused ! In fact, there was no end to his defiance of all the laws which had hitherto controlled the skippers and sailors of Rowanden, and there was apparently no end to his success. Nevertheless discreet old fishers, who knew what was what much better than these young innovators, shook their heads and declared—

"There's nae guid'll come o' yon loon."

Barely three weeks after his marriage, Bob Keith was offered by his brother the post of chief mate on board the *Jessie Bell*, of Kingshaven, with a small share in profits.

The offer was a good one, and Bob was anxious to accept ; he only hesitated because he had been so recently married. Mysie would have liked him to refuse, because of the reckless character which Alick bore in his seamanship ; but she was too young a wife to know how to exert her authority. She could not deny that Alick's offer was an excellent one, or that it was the right thing, even for her sake, that her husband should take advantage of any opportunity to make way in the world. Bob accepted his brother's offer.

The *Jessie Bell* sailed, Mysie watching it from the cottage door until it disappeared over the sea.

Some months afterwards, the skipper of another Kingshaven vessel reported that in the midst of a terrific gale, to avoid

which he had wisely tacked, he had seen the *Jessie Bell* attempting to enter the Baltic; then suddenly he had lost sight of her. From that day nothing was ever heard of the vessel, or of any of its crew.

Mysie listened to the news, dumb and white. Her own parents, and the mother of Alick and Bob, were overwhelmed with grief. They went into mourning, and lamented the deaths of the two promising youths.

Mysie was silent, but she would *not* put on mourning. She arranged her cottage with scrupulous care to the position which everything had occupied on the day when Bob went away, and went about her ordinary work quietly and resolutely. She said nothing concerning what she hoped or expected; she simply placed things so, and went on with her work—waiting. She served her parents faithfully, she gave more than a daughter's duty to the mother of her husband. They died: Mysie did not change; the house was still in order, just as when he had left it. Many good offers of marriage were made to her, and they were declined very resolutely. She was still waiting for him.

She never said that she was waiting, she would neither speak about the *Jessie Bell*, nor listen to any one else speaking of it. The moment she heard the name mentioned, she would go away—without fuss, but in a manner which clearly showed that it was a subject she did not wish to enter upon.

Her house was kept with a tender care, ready for the wanderer whenever he might appear; the duties which fell to her were performed with alertness and cheerfulness. The folk pitied her, and shook their heads, lamenting her strange hallucination. By-and-by people became so accustomed to her ways that they scarcely noticed them; and, with the exception of the house, and her firm refusal to leave it or alter it in the slightest degree, there was nothing odd in her ways, and much that was kind and useful.

At early morning or late in the evening, Mysie was often seen standing at her door, looking out to sea; during a storm she was always there, whether it happened late or early. Whenever there was a wreck, Mysie was the first to know it—the first to give warning, and to call for help—the first down at the shore, giving the aid of a strong and intelligent man in

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launching the life-boat, inspiring the crew by her energetic presence, or in preparing signals—ropes—assisting bravely in everything which could further the good work of rescue.

Mysie eagerly scrutinised the face of every creature who was carried ashore by the boat, or cast on to the sands and rocks by the great angry waves. She looked as if for the face of some dear friend, whom she never found. But there was no murmur of disappointment, no word of complaint on her part; she went on with her work as vigorously as if there had been no hope of her own dispelled.

She had ceased to gather mussels and limpets for bait on the death of her father; nursing and weaving stockings for the neighbours and the farmers' wives gave her ample occupation. Her calm ways and her skill earned for her the title of "The Wise Woman," and she was often consulted by the young folk about the most delicate as well as the most ridiculous dilemmas.

Whatever delusion or hope she entertained regarding her husband's fate, she did not trouble any one with it. The old love remained; but she did her work bravely.

"You have been very patient, Mysie," Grace said after a pause; and it was the first time she had ever made allusion to the woman's past; then dreamily and speaking to herself, "I wonder if it is better to wait, hoping, than to know that waiting and hoping are vain and wrong."

Mysie lifted her eyes from the rough stocking she was knitting, and, with a strange inward look, gazed first out through the window toward the sea, and then at her visitor.

"You're looking poorly, Miss Wishart," she said; "I noticed it when you came in; I'm doubting you're no weel."

"I am not very well, but I shall be better in a few days."

"Something has gane wrang wi' you."

"Yes—something which I thought would not have troubled me, because I was doing what I knew to be right; and yet it is vexing me, and making me feel unlike myself—making me feel as if it would have been better to have done wrong."

Sheshuddered at herself as she spoke these words in a whisper. A pause, during which Mysie's knitting dropped into her lap, and her soft grey eyes remained fixed upon Grace with a questioning expression.

"Have you to wait—like me?"

"No ; I must neither wait nor hope. I think it would be pleasant to change places with you, Mysie."

"And you ha'e siller and land, and youth, and a' thing that ane can crave for."

"Not everything—none of us have that ; but I would rather have a light heart with a light pouch than all the wealth in the world."

"Better a heavy heart than a heavy conscience."

"Which kills soonest ?" said Grace, with some bitterness in her sweet voice ; "if any choice were given to me, I think that is the one I would choose."

"I'll tell you, Miss Wishart, what I have never told to living creature before ; it'll maybe help you, and you have been guid to me. When the news came that Bob's ship was wrecked and every soul aboard lost, I thought it would be easier to die than to live. Then I wouldna believe it was true, because I couldna think that God would be so hard upon puir creatures that had never done ony harm they ken'd o'. So I put the house in order, and waited for him to come hame. But he didna come. The deevil was aye putting ill thoughts in my head, and I wrought late and early to keep him out. Syne, I found that without a bawbee I was able to help my neighbours, and that they were grateful and kind to me. Syne, I came to understand that my work was needed for others, and so I had been left, waiting. I'm waiting and watching aye, but doing my best a' the while ; and though I'm waiting yet, I ken that when he comes it'll be to take me awa' frae this place. It was lang, lang or I could understand that, but I learned it at last, and I'm content to be quiet and bide my time to gang hame to him."

"Aye—but if you had to wait, Mysie, without hope—to wait knowing that you could never meet him again—what then ?"

"I canna say. I think I would ha'e waited a' the same, sure that He would learn me how to thole in His time."

The simple unquestioning faith of the woman who had suffered so much did Grace good. Her heart was purer when she left the house than when she had entered it. Thinking of Mysie's life, she became the more resolute in directing her steps into the narrow path which lay before her.

"It is strange," she reflected, "that the calm, pure temperament which makes us morally grand, is only found in one who has suffered much affliction; as if it were necessary that we should suffer in order to be good or wise."

As she passed through the village, grateful voices saluted her with kind inquiries for herself and home; pleasant smiles showed her the happiness which her presence gave: the bairns ran to her with merry, eager faces—with some selfishness, too, for they knew that she generally carried a packet of "Peter Reid's rock," a sweetmeat famous along the east coast.

She was comforted and encouraged; her foot was firmer on the ground as she made her way homeward, and the world was much brighter than it had appeared in the morning. She seemed to waken to a new sense, and she was thinking how full the world is of lovers whom we never know, how full of loveliness that we never see, and of music that we never hear. There are the people we love or who love us at a glance, and whom we never see again; there are the countless beauties of nature through which we pass unobserving; the forests and shades—ever varying with the day—of flowers, trees, mountain, valley, and sea; there are the bright songs of the birds always making the air musical, and to which we so seldom give an attentive ear. How much of all this passes back to the Giver, unseen, unenjoyed, and unappreciated! When His glories pass so, what wonder that the greatest efforts of a poor human heart should often pass away unkenneled?

"But God sees and knows," said Grace; and something of the old sweet light dawned upon her face.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOME.

HARVEST work had begun when they returned. The crops were yellow, and falling steadily under the scythe or reaping-machine; the fields were dry and parched-looking; the heather on the moors was crisp, and crackled under the feet. The opal sea flashed its many colours in the eyes, dazzling them with its splendour; in the hot noontide the sound of waves was refreshing to the senses.

Dan met them at the station.

"Glad to see you back," he said; "I hope you're both weel."

He spoke as calmly as if they had not been out of his sight five minutes. Walter gave his hand a hearty shake, and Teenie did the same—no more, for kissing and hugging were quite out of their way, and the skipper would have been scandalised exceedingly if his daughter had offered to kiss him there on the platform before all the people.

She was looking bright and happy, radiant indeed; and the blush which covered her cheeks, as various friends saluted them and wished them happiness, added to the brightness of her eyes and to the joy of her smile. She was not at all awkward; she nodded to old acquaintances, ran up to fish-wives and fisher-loons with cheery greetings; although they were awed by the splendour of her silk gown, and almost afraid to speak to the lady, she was just the old, wild, fierce, and kindly Teenie that she had been before there was the slightest likelihood of her becoming wife to the Laird's son.

"She's no stuck-up ava," said Tak'-it-easy Davie, who happened to be on the platform, and to receive a warm greeting from the bride; "by my soul, I wish she'd married me."

"You, you guid-for-naething loon!" cried auld Meg Carnoustie, who, with creel of fish on her back, had been one of

the first to whom the bride had spoken ; " she'd be sair wanting a man that took you, let alone Thorston's lass."

" Wait a wee," says Davie with a sagacious nod.

Then Teenie would bow to the grand folk with as much ease and self-possession as if she had been born in a palace, instead of the cottage at the Norlan' Head. True, she had very little to say to the grand folk ; but then they had as little to say to her, and were rather disappointed that she did not show any gratitude for their condescension in noticing her at all.

" She's a saucy creature," muttered Mrs. Dubbieside, " and has no sense of her station at all. One would think she was used to being married, she takes it so easy—or else she's thinking yet that she's the Methven heir."

Poor Teenie had not the remotest thought about George Methven, or his troublesome fortune ; neither had she the remotest idea that she was not behaving with the becoming propriety of a newly married girl. She was happy, and she never suspected that she ought to act or look otherwise than as she felt.

Walter was awkward and shy enough for both parties ; and he had to confess to himself that—although he could find no reason for it—he would have been better pleased if Teenie had been a little less boisterous. He had an unconscious sense that a lavender silk dress with a long train, and a high bonnet with orange blossoms, did not agree well with a manner which suggested a skipping rope. His sense of incongruity or the ridiculous was pained.

He shut his eyes immediately to that, and admired—or rather loved the more—the good heart and generous nature which were quite unconscious of the incongruity between silks and fish scales. He was grateful that Teenie remained unchanged.

Nevertheless, he found himself as awkward and bashful as when he had gone up to receive his first prize at college, knowing that the eyes of a crowd of his class-mates and their friends were upon him. It was a self-consciousness which he felt was contemptible, and he tried to get rid of it, but could not.

He was heartily glad when they were seated in the Dalma-

hoy gig which had been graciously sent for them by the Laird, and were driving at a good pace up to Drumliemount.

It seemed very strange to her when they turned the corner of the road away from the Norlan' Head, and moved in what was comparatively a strange direction to her. Yet she was going home!—going to the place where her life was to pass away in the common round of cares and duties—going to the place in which all her thoughts and hopes must be in future centred. It was a new world full of bewildering novelty, and yet surrounded by the dearest and most precious of old associations. It was almost uncomfortable to turn away from the old home to the new. Here was one of her vague cravings gratified, and somehow it amused and puzzled her rather than gave her satisfaction.

Ailie had been at the house for a week, scrubbing, cleaning, and brushing, until she had almost driven the one servant lass “clean out of her judgment,” as the girl declared.

Ailie was at the gate to receive them—she had been there many times during the morning, looking out for them. Her mutch (cap) was snow-white, and the frills were as stiff as starch and piping could make them—forming a white, prim halo, round her ancient and kindly face.

The garden was in trim order now, and the roses were in full bloom on the house. They passed up the newly gravelled path—gravelled with small, round, pale lavender stones, which rolled and rattled under the feet—and into the house.

When they crossed the threshold, Walter put his arm round his wife, and, kissing her, whispered one word—
“Home!”

What a delightful sound it had, spoken by him in that place, in that loving voice! The sunlight streamed in upon them, a round mote-white beam fell on them, and the perfume of roses and honeysuckle mingled with the word, and they were always afterwards associated with it in her mind.

Home! she had never known how much there was in the word until that moment. There she was to be queen, and live happy ever after. It was not the gorgeous palace she had dreamed about, but it was a reality; and at this minute she felt as if she would have been quite content if it had been a mud cabin, or a shieling of wattles and heather.

They went into the parlour: the window was wide open, and the perfume of roses and honeysuckle filled the room. She threw off her bonnet; he took off his hat and light overcoat, thrust his fingers through his hair, and looked at her fondly, proudly.

"It's not much of a place, is it Teenie?—but it's our own," he said with a laugh.

"And that's everything," said she laughing too, and examining each article in the room, mentally estimating its cost—without the least thought that more or less was anything to her.

He looked at her with loving admiration.

"Yes, Teenie, that is everything, so long as we are true to each other. Do you think you can be quite satisfied here?"

"Satisfied!—I'm just that proud and happy I could greet for very joy and—I dinna ken what."

Her eyes and voice were full of tears, which made her very beautiful, although they were not allowed to find vent.

"I wonder if you will always think so?" he said reflectively.

She looked at him with that winning expression which a pretty woman's face obtains when mouth and eyes form an O of wonder, rebuke, and love.

There was only one answer to such a look, and he made it—he hugged her.

"There," she cried, pretending to struggle for freedom, "let me begin my duties at once, and go into the kitchen to see about the dinner."

"Confound the dinner—Ailie will see to that for to-day at any rate."

But Teenie's restless spirit would not consent to that arrangement. She was eager for the fun of showing her authority as "the mistress," as the maid of all work called her, and eager to examine every corner and treasure of her home.

She changed her dress with commendable rapidity, and in a neat house-dress of simple cotton pranced down stairs. She glanced into the study, which Walter called his workshop, and there, as she expected, saw him already among his books. He made a movement as if to approach her, but she gave him a merry look, and closed the door between them.

The husband smiled, and turned again to his noiseless but most eloquent and dearest friends, books.

He was unspeakably happy. He was beginning the life of which he had often dreamed, and beginning it in entire accordance with his own wishes. Married to the woman he loved, and appointed to the work he loved, he had no fears for the future, no doubt of accomplishing some part at least of his ambitious designs—the designs being only to prove himself useful in helping his fellows to realize that mere life is a blessed gift—that to the true-hearted life is full of gracious sympathies and helpers.

He was not blind to the possibilities, or even probabilities, of failure ; but he comforted himself with the reflection—

“A man must fail in so many things, that to succeed in any one he must work hard and fast to accomplish a great number.”

He intended to accomplish a great number. Meanwhile, sitting in his cozy room, the open window admitting the lazy air, the hum of bees, and the perfume of flowers, he felt grateful for the mercies which surrounded him, and full of earnest resolutions. He thought that whenever he might be disposed to discontent, he would only have to remember this day, and he would be cured.

Teenie made her way to the kitchen, and was received by Ailie with new exclamations of admiration and pleasure.

“Marriage has improved you just wonderful,” she declared ; “’deed, I’m thinking I would like to get married mysel’.”

Teenie enjoyed the idea of Ailie getting married, and was very energetic superintending the dinner, examining the furnishing of the kitchen, and telling her old friend of the wonders she had seen in Edinburgh—of the castle on the top of the rock, the houses ten and twelve stories high, the grand shops, three times bigger than anything in Kingshaven, and many other marvels which made Ailie’s eyes open wide in wonder.

That first dinner at home was very pleasant to the husband and wife, the little parlour was so bright, and they were so happy in themselves. Then they went out to the garden, and seated themselves under an apple tree. He read ; she played with her fingers, and stared at the ground with an air of profound attention, but she was busy speculating about all she

would have to do in the house, and not hearing a word of what he read. He discovered that by-and-by, and closed the book.

"You couldn't have been more inattentive if I had been reading one of my own sermons," he said maliciously.

She felt very wicked, and could make no excuse. She just looked at him helplessly.

"We'll have all sorts of visitors to-morrow," he said, changing the subject.

"What for?"

"Why, to congratulate us, to quiz us, and to see if we haven't already repented our bargain."

"I wish they wouldn't come."

"So do I."

"Then why don't you tell them not to come? Whenever there was anybody I didn't want to come to the house, I told them to stay away."

"Arcadia!" laughed Walter; "we can't do that, Teenie."

"Why?"

"Because we must do a great many things we don't want to do, in order not to give annoyance to others, and because these visits are signs of friendliness with which we ought to be pleased. I wonder Grace hasn't been over this afternoon. She knows we are at home."

Grace!—was he already wearying for her?

Teenie was silent; it seemed as if a shadow had crossed the bright sunlight.

She moved nearer to him, placed her hand on his, and looked into his face with such earnest eyes, she said softly—

"You're no sorry, are you?"

"Sorry!—for what?"

"That—that we're married now?"

He regarded her with an amused and puzzled expression.

"You dear, stupid, wee lassie, what could put such an absurd notion into your head? Why, if ever a man was permitted to know perfect happiness on this earth, I am realizing it at this moment."

Her hand closed tightly upon his, and she laughed at herself. She did not know why, but his warmth, his look, and the mere words of his assurance gave her a feeling of intense relief.

CHAPTER XXV.

MORE SHADOWS.

THE calls of ceremony proved rather more of an affliction than Teenie had expected; and much as she had wished before that they might be left alone, the wish was a great deal more fervent after the first half-dozen visitors had appeared.

The calls were made at uncertain hours—she was compelled to be always ready; and she was obliged to pretend to be pleased to see people who, she felt, cared nothing at all about her, and for whom she could not care anything. Then she very speedily became aware of two facts: that one-half the callers came out of idle curiosity, and the other half out of a sort of pity for her husband—as if they would show him that, although he had been foolish, they were magnanimous enough not to ignore him altogether. Very few seemed to come with any friendly disposition towards her.

Teenie didn't like this—it was humiliating to her, and she was irritated by it. If good-nature did not induce folk to desire to shake hands and wish them happy days, why should they fash themselves and her by coming at all? She did not want them.

She had not yet learned that as a wife she was bound to forget herself, and respect the civilities paid to her husband as much as if they were paid to herself.

The whole business of the calls was a disagreeable falsehood in her eyes, and several times Walter had serious difficulty in persuading her to appear. When she did appear she was silent almost to sullenness; she said "Thank you" to the good wishes which were expressed, but she said it like a parrot, without soul or any touch of sensibility to the meaning of the words. Most of the visitors went away with grim forebodings of a miserable future for the young minister.

"He's caught a Tartar," was the general exclamation.

Aunt Jane came, and Teenie could not abide her, she was so overwhelming with her patronage. Aunt Jane went away with the impression that Walter was worse than a fool—he was a donkey; and she experienced a sort of satisfaction in thinking that his harness would very soon gall him.

Widow Smyllie called, and Teenie hated her, she praised everything with such painfully sweet airs, and such thinly veiled contempt. The widow retired with the idea that Teenie was a dull, ignorant doll, of a very bad pattern.

The gentlemen were not nearly so difficult to deal with, Teenie thought; there was far more heartiness in their manner and voices than the ladies had shown; consequently she was much more herself with them, and they went away with the notion that young Dalmahoy had been lucky, all things considered. General Forbes was quite charmed with the bride, and could scarcely believe that she was only a fisherman's daughter. He mumbled a pretty speech to her, in which he was sincere enough under the influence of her brave bright eyes, and pledged himself to be her knight-errant, if ever she should need one.

Aunt Jane and the general had a fierce quarrel next day, on the subject of Walter's wife, and they parted mutually resolved never to speak to each other again. A similar resolution was usually formed by them once a month at least. But they were neighbours, they were both excellent whist-players, and somehow the terrible resolution was always forgotten in the course of a few days, during which each did severe penance in missing the favourite rubber and the sixpenny points.

Teenie was glad when the day was over, and the outer door closed for the night. She had never known anything so wearisome or so disagreeable as that day's proceedings.

What made it all the worse, she saw that Walter was not pleased with her share in the performance, although he expressed no hint of disapprobation.

"I hope they'll never come back again," she said spitefully.

"They are not likely to come for some time."

"The longer they stay away, the better I'll be pleased. It's a shame that they should come vexing folk for no other end than just to see what you're like, and to price your dress and your

furniture, as though such things were the whole measure of your worth. I saw them taking stock of me."

He did not reply immediately, and when he did, it was in a very serious tone.

"Those people came to us, Teenie, quite as much because they think it right to come, as because they wish to see what we are like. We must do what we think to be right, too—respect the first motive of these friendly visits, and try to forget or overlook any selfish thoughts which may mingle with it."

Teenie believed that he was right, but she was too much irritated just then to make confession. Still she had a fancy that, when they found it pleasanter to be alone, people had no business to intrude unasked.

She was lighting the lamp; he was sitting, book in hand, purposing to read as soon as it was lit.

"It was a pity Grace did not come to-day," he said, "she would have been a great relief to you when you had to meet so many strangers, and she knows them all. I hope there is nothing the matter with her."

Teenie almost allowed the globe to drop over the glass funnel. He seemed to be always thinking of her; nothing could go wrong but Grace would have set it right. The mood she was in made her feel spiteful for a minute. Then, she checked herself, remembering what he had said last night. She took a healthier view of his words, and recognised in them his kindly anxiety for her comfort.

She would have been better pleased, though, if he had suggested any one but Grace.

Next day they walked over to Dalmahoy. A hot glaring sun, the earth throbbing with heat, woolly cloudlets floating drowsily against a grey sky.

They took a short cut through a field of barley, where the harvesters were busy at work. One half of the grain had been cut, and now studded the field in rows of stocks, round which half a dozen touzly-headed bairns were romping; the other half was rapidly falling under the long sweeps of the scythes. The voices of the harvesters were loud and mirthful, and an occasional snatch of song cheered on the work. The three scythesmen bent sturdily to their task: it was a point of honour amongst them how straight should be the line of standing grain

each left behind him, and how short the stubble. Each scythesman was followed by an "uptaker," a woman who gathered up the cut grain in a bundle, formed a band by deftly knotting together two lengths of the straw, upon which she placed the bundle, and passed on to the next heap left by her scythesman, to repeat the same process. She was followed by the "bandster," a man who caught up the two ends of the band which the woman had made, tied them together, and placed the bundle up on end against two others, thus forming a stook, which stood there for several days to dry before being carried into the farmyard, and built up into stacks.

The bandster was followed by the "raker"—a loon of about fifteen who, with a broad horse-belt crossing his left shoulder, dragged a large rake after him, moving round and about the stooks, gathering up the loose stalks into heaps at one side.

From the top of the field to the bottom was called a "bout," and in the middle of the bout the three leaders halted to sharpen their scythes. A fierce rasping noise broke harshly upon the clear atmosphere, mingled with sounds of voices in gossip and laughter; flocks of tewhits (lapwings), their white breasts glittering in the sunlight, swept overhead.

The work began again and continued to the end of the field. There the scythes are shouldered, and the crowd of workers trudges—leisurely enough to displease the farmer, who is looking on, if he had not been so accustomed to the ways of his folk—back to the top of the bout, to begin again. During this promenade there is plenty of time for courting, story-telling, and now and then a song. The men and women, lads and lasses, take advantage of the opportunity.

The men wear white linen jackets, coloured shirts, corduroy breeches, and straw hats—except one, a distinguished poacher of the district, and he wears a foxy-like fur cap which has a close resemblance to his own reddish hair and whiskers.

The women wear great white or yellow sun-bonnets, which fall over the neck and shoulders, and protrude over the brow, displaying the ruddy, healthy, laughing faces to much advantage; short gowns of brown or red-spotted calico, grey drugget petticoats short enough for a ballet-dancer, exposing thick sturdy limbs covered with grey worsted stockings.

The harvesters never halted in their work when they saw

the young minister and his wife, although they knew them quite well. But when the two came near, the men gave a hearty "Fine day, sir," and the women, with respectfully averted heads, stared at Teenie sidelong, and took an inventory of everything she had on.

When the couple had passed, the harvesters nodded to each other, made comments and jokes, with some of which neither Walter nor his wife would have been pleased had they overheard, although there was not a word of ill-nature in anything that was said. There was, on the contrary, a very hearty "Wish them weel" on every lip; but the young couple supplied material for conversation and speculation during the next two bouts.

The Laird was quite gracious in his reception; he saluted Teenie in a stately way, and expressed the happiness he felt in seeing her look so well; he hoped she was comfortable in the new house; and if there was anything he could do to add to her comfort, she had only to mention it.

Teenie felt as she always did with Dalmahoy, uncertain whether he was in earnest or making fun of her.

"Everything is very comfortable in the house," she said, with eyes fixed on the carpet, and thoughts wandering back to the last interview she had with the Laird in that room—his warning that she should refuse Walter, and his reference to the Methven fortune. Somehow she wondered, in a faint distant way, whether she had done right or wrong in acting contrary to his advice—"but thank you all the same."

"How funny you should come to-day, and we were just going over to see you!" said Miss Burnett, sailing into the room, her long neck bare as usual.

"You do look nice—I wish I was married!" cried Alice, with her customary ecstasy.

The ladies entered into an animated cross-examination of their sister-in-law, as to the latest styles of bonnets and dress which she had seen in Edinburgh. They were properly shocked to find that she was lamentably ignorant upon this vital subject. She could not describe one of the countless new bonnets she must have seen in the shops and on the ladies in Prince's Street; she could not give the remotest idea of the

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colour, material, or—most important of all—the shape and trimmings of a single dress!

"Head and body are all fluffed up behind in a silly way," was all the description she could give, and the ladies were much disappointed.

Poor Teenie had been too much taken up with her husband, too much interested in the city and the various excursions they made, to Craigmillar, Roslin, and other places, to give the slightest heed to the fashions; and now she found that all the historical, biographical, and topographical information she had collected was as nothing compared to the fashion of a bonnet!

She felt humbled in the presence of her grand sisters, and sorry that she had displayed such complete ignorance of what a lady ought to have known and observed.

"But I can tell you all about Allan Ramsay and his 'Gentle Shepherd,'" she cried, making a last effort to rescue her character from the abyss of utter ignorance; "I saw his statue, and Christopher North's—that was the great Professor Wilson, and I'm going to read all his books."

"Oh, how funny!" exclaimed Miss Burnett, somewhat more shortly than usual.

"Yes, dear, but we'd rather hear about the bonnets," said Alice again pathetically; "now that papa keeps us so close here, we can only see these things once in two or three years, and it would have been so nice to have gone to the flower show in something fresh from Edinburgh, which is always fresh from London, and that again is fresh from Paris. It would have spited Madam Smith of Kingshaven, who makes a trip once a year to London, and dictates to everybody all the year round on the strength of it. It would have been nice to spite her. I wish we had thought of telling you what to look at."

"I wish you had," said Teenie humbly, and ready to submit to any penance for her stupidity.

Walter and his father were standing in the recess of one of the windows, talking seriously.

"I'm heartily glad you find things answer well so far," the Laird was saying, "and I hope it will continue. I hope it for my own sake as well as yours."

"I have no doubt of it."

"At present, you mean?"

"No, always."

"Just so: we shall not discuss the question: I hope you may be right. All I want is that you should quite understand, as you have made your bed so you must lie on it."

"I am quite content," answered Walter smiling; "I accept the future as it may come to me; and whether it be good or ill, I hope my friends will make allowances for me."

"Don't fear for them: our friends make many more allowances for us than we give them credit for. If we were pulled up every time we blunder through ignorance, or selfishness, or carelessness, we would be worried into our graves in a year. Do you make allowance for them. I think that much more needed."

"Thank you, sir; I shall not fail in that if they will only show consideration to her."

"She'll earn consideration for herself, or I'm mistaken," said Dalmahoy, looking at Teenie through his glasses as she sat between his two daughters. "You remember what I have told you; for though my resolution not to help you might break down, that won't alter the fact that my pockets are empty, my account at the bank blank, and I can't help you even if I would."

"I trust you will never be annoyed by any necessity to think of helping us."

He spoke quietly, but proudly too, proud in the sense of youth, health, and hope, and in the possession of the rarest treasure a man can call his own—the wife he loved, and who loved him.

They quitted Dalmahoy with all honours. Peter Drysdale was never more respectful than he was to Teenie; he had not smiled for years until she came—she made him think of the grand visions he had entertained when he first saw the "panoramy," and he declared that she "wasna the least upsetting."

Alice at the window waved a handkerchief to them as they passed down the avenue; and the Laird, twirling his glasses round his forefinger, vowed that they did not look ill-matched.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DAME WISHART.

THEY walked on to Craighburn.

As they came near the house both looked anxiously for Grace, but she was not visible. Both had the same impression that there was something unusually quiet about the house. No dog stirred, and no one appeared to welcome them.

"I am afraid Grace is ill," he said, as he rang the bell.

"You think a great deal about Grace," she said, looking straight at him, and with a faint return of the old feeling of spitefulness.

"Yes," he replied, with the clear honest look into her eyes which nothing but perfect honesty on his part, and utter absence of a suspicion of her feeling, could have permitted; "she occupies the next place to you, Teenie, in my thoughts. She has always been good and generous to me."

"More generous than most women would have been, as you know," he would have added, but he happily checked himself, thinking that the reminder might be unpleasant. He had no idea how unpleasant it would have been. An honest man is very stupid when placed in such a position as Walter's, and he was stupid and blind too.

They entered the drawing-room, and presently Grace herself came to them, pale, and eyes sunken. She advanced quickly to Teenie, kissed her, and in a low earnest voice said—

"I am glad to see you back, and looking well."

There was no mistaking the sincerity of that voice and look, no mistaking the truth of the brave heart that beat within the frail frame of the bonnie, unfortunate woman.

Then she turned to Walter. He kissed her too, and Teenie felt no pang of jealousy. Somehow the appearance of Grace, and her manner, had altogether disarmed the incipient viciousness with which she had been disposed to regard her.

"I was afraid you were ill, Grace," he said warmly, and holding her hand.

How her heart beat! how her whole form quivered under his touch, and the kindness of his words! What was she not ready to sacrifice, just to be permitted sometimes to touch his hand—sometimes to hear his voice saying a friendly word to her! Poor Grace, so strong to help others, so powerless to help herself; she would have sacrificed anything to have an occasional smile from him, if no more than such a smile as he might give to a pet animal. Surely Teenie could not grudge her that!

"No, I am not ill, but my mother has had a bad turn, and I have been obliged to stay with her day and night. She cannot bear me to be absent from her, sleeping or waking. That is why I have not been over to see you."

"I thought there was something wrong when you did not come. But I hope aunt will soon be better."

"She is very old," said Grace wearily, "and she has little chance of being much better in this world."

Standing there, holding his hand, he looking in her face, which had grown haggard during the last few days, she saw that he was quite unconscious of the real cause of her altered appearance. Standing there, holding his hand with one of her own, and taking one of Teenie's in the other, she silently vowed that he should never know the real and deeper cause. She looked at him with a faint despairing smile, and then turned her face towards the wife with such a pitiful expression of inquiry, asking did she understand, that Teenie felt ashamed of the cruel thoughts of which she had been guilty, and wished that she could do something, however slight, to comfort this poor soul, that seemed to be cast out upon the world without any place in which to rest.

Grace saw that she understood, and the fingers tightened upon hers, and the eyes brightened with gratitude—brightened and glowed, and the whole face flushed as if with new health, in the new pleasure which had been given to her.

It was a compact between the two as distinct and well understood as if lawyers had written it out with their disagreeable formality on imperishable parchment. It was a compact as clearly defined between the two as if it had been discussed

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by a congress of lawyers. Which of them would be the first to forget it?

"Is aunt in bed?" he asked.

"No; I wish she could be persuaded to keep her bed; she would suffer much less pain; but she persists in getting up to her chair, and I have difficulty enough to keep her in the one room. She has attempted to go out several times, but she cannot walk, and I am obliged to watch her closely lest she should fall and hurt herself in one of her efforts to get upon her feet."

"Why will she not stay in bed?"

The tears glistened in Grace's eyes.

"She has a great dread of death, and fancies that if she were once to yield and lie abed she would die immediately. So she almost lives in her chair. It is often twelve and one o'clock before I can get her to lie down, and then she is awake at the first sign of daylight, insisting upon getting up. When she is very ill she will not go to bed at all, thinking that by keeping to her chair she will escape her enemy."

"This must be very wearying to you, Grace. You must let Teenie and me relieve you."

She shook her head.

"My mother will scarcely allow me to be out of the room."

"We'll go up and propose it to her, at any rate," he said decisively.

There was a momentary and inexplicable hesitation on Grace's part, and she glanced at Teenie doubtfully, as if the proposed visit might not be agreeable to her.

"I would like to see your mother," said Teenie quietly. She had never known a mother, and she felt eager to offer help in any way that might relieve Grace.

"Very well, come up, but you must not mind anything she says."

And again she looked pleadingly, as it were, at Teenie.

They went up-stairs. Mrs Wishart was seated in her big chair, her hands falling limply over the sides, her chin sunk upon her breast, a painful spectacle of suffering age fighting stoutly against natural decay.

Walter advanced and kissed her, expressing a hope that she was well.

"That's a good lad. I have na ken'd what a man's mou'

was like this long while. I'm no just so spry as I would like to be, but I'll be on my feet again in a day or twa. It was kind o' you to come and see an auld body like me. But wha's yon?"

"That's my wife—Teenie."

"Wife, wife," mumbled the old lady vacantly.

"Yes, and she has come with me to see if you will let us wait on you sometimes, in order to save Grace."

"Wife," continued Dame Wishart, as if she had not heard him, and as if she were making an effort to solve some riddle; "that canna be your wife, Wattie; there's your wife (pointing to Grace). You were paired lang syne, when you were bairns, and it brings Craighburn and Dalmahoy together, just as we would like to see them. Craighburn's the richest of the two, Wattie, and you may count yoursel' lucky, for Grace has had a heap o' offers, and——"

"You forget, mother," said Grace, advancing, with much deprecation in the look she gave to Teenie.

"Forget? forget?" exclaimed Mrs. Wishart, startled and distressed, for that was one of the calamities which, next to death, she most dreaded—the loss of memory.

She pressed her gaunt fingers against her temples, and her feeble eyes wandered vaguely from one face to the other.

"You forget, mother, that Walter has married Teenie Thorston—a good, bonnie lass."

"Wha is she?"

"You remember Skipper Thorston?"

"Him that saved the folk that were drowning aboard the steamer *Ariel*?"

"Yes."

"Ah, you see I mind quite weel what happens, and that was a pickle years syne. But what about him? What were you saying? You're awfu' ravell't in your way of telling things, Grace. You should try to be like me."

"Well, it's his daughter Walter has married."

"Where are you, Wattie?" And she groped about for him as if she were in the dark.

"Here, aunt" (taking her hand affectionately, although he felt somewhat vexed upon Teenie's account).

"It's no possible that you've given Grace the gae-by? For

though I couldna thole to let her away just now, she's a fine bairn, and she'll be a grand wife to him that gets her."

"Grace and I have settled that, aunt," he said awkwardly, and wishing that Teenie might have been spared this dialogue.

"You mean that you have done it."

"It was done with her consent, and because we thought it best."

"Mother, mother, you are forgetting. I explained it all to you," cried Grace, much disturbed; "and the doctor said you were not to excite yourself on any account."

To the amazement of the others the old woman stood up on her feet, gazing fiercely upon them all. Years seemed to pass away from her as she spoke—

"I do not forget, Grace. I mind that, when you were a bairn, I settled that you should be the means of keeping Dalmahoy in the family. I married in the hope of it, when I saw the waste my daft brother was carrying on. I brought you up in the expectation of it, and I could almost have been content to die, seeing the wish fulfilled in you and Wattie."

"Whisht, mother, whisht! a stronger will than ours has ordered things as they are."

"I will not whisht, and you had no right to take upon yourself to settle a matter of this kind without speaking to me."

"I did speak to you, but please wait till they are gone, and I'll explain."

"You must have spoken to me when I was asleep, but I'm awake now. Do you ken what you have done, you and Wattie between you? You have murdered the family of Dalmahoy; and here am I, an auld frail woman, just dropping into the grave, and learn at the last minute that what I planned and lived for has gone all agee through your fault."

"I'm sorry, aunt, that I should have disappointed you," said Walter, eager in any way to divert the storm from Grace's head.

Dame Wishart was twenty years younger in her wrath.

"Sorry—you may weel say that! You are a fool, Wattie, and that poor lassie who has helped to make a fool of you will be sorry for it some day. You have broken up Dalmahoy, for I tell you that wild brother of mine hasna a penny to bless himself with; but, worse than that almost, you have lost the

best wife that ever man had. Oh, I understand, auld and doitered as I am. Grace has given into your nonsense just because she was the most fit to be your true wife. You have been cruel to her, but take my word wi' you—the word of a wife that stands in the grave—you have been far more cruel to yourself. She cared for you, you poor stupid gowk, as never man was cared for by woman. I ken it a', blind and helpless as I look. Awa' wi' you, awa' wi' you—I canna thole you near me."

She dropped back upon her chair apparently lifeless. She had spoken with such rapid vehemence that no effort of her daughter could interrupt her, and she was utterly insensible to the agony she caused to the one on whose behalf she spoke. Grace would have done anything to have spared Teenie such a scene, and so would Walter. He had grown pale, and would, in obedience to the distressed signals of Grace, have forced Teenie from the room. But she imperiously determined to remain and hear all that was said. She was the only one who was quite calm, but her eyes brightened and her cheeks flushed a little as Dame Wishart proceeded. For the first time she seemed to understand all that Walter had given up for her sake.

He advanced hastily to offer assistance in restoring his aunt, but Grace motioned him back.

"She will be worse if she sees you. Don't stay.—Teenie, remember she is very ill. I'll be over to see you as soon as I can get out."

Teenie pressed her hand without speaking, but the big bright eyes were full of pathetic interest and regret.

On the way home they found conversation difficult—he was vexed by what his aunt had said, because he felt that it would annoy his wife; and she was sorry for it, knowing how much he would suffer on her account; but neither had sense enough to speak out the feeling which was uppermost, and so they watched each other wistfully, each wishing that it were possible to say something which would impart comfort to the other, and yet saying nothing.

"You must not mind what my aunt said," he remarked with an effort, as they were ascending Drumliemount; "she is an old woman, and it is not easy for her to submit to the destruc-

tion of any of her cherished schemes. But I did not know until to-day that she had so set her heart upon that match."

He pretended to laugh, and looked most uncomfortable.

"Would it have made any difference if you had known it?" said Teenie, as he opened the gate and she passed through.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't," he answered, this time with quite a hearty grin, for he was looking at her, so brave, bright, and bonnie, and at their cosy cottage. Home and beauty, both his. Was it possible to have decided otherwise than he had done?—

"Are you sorry?"

"No," she answered, absently, "but I was wondering——"

"Well, what were you wondering, now?"

"I was wondering," she said, halting to pluck a white rose, and to pin it to his coat, "I was wondering if some day you might not remember all that your aunt has said, and maybe blame me."

"It will be you only who will be able to make me remember it, or to regret what I have done. When that day comes, Teenie, we'll be a very miserable couple. We don't look like it just now."

And both laughed, with something approaching gaiety in their tone.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TRANSITION.

THEY were to settle down now, and apply themselves to the common duties of daily life—she to see that their one domestic swept and dusted the rooms properly (that was easy enough, she thought), and to look after the cooking (she felt some despair in thinking of that); he to read, to write his sermons, and to visit his parishioners.

To him the idea of the simple quiet life he was to lead, in which there was yet the possibility of accomplishing important work, was delightful. The woman he loved as his companion, the work to do to which he was most devoted—what more could man desire or hope for in this world?

His sermon did not progress so rapidly or so satisfactorily as he would have liked. He began to think that he was too happy to get below the surface of his task. The earnest thoughts which he desired to utter somehow lost their strength in being transferred to paper. Then when he had concentrated his whole heart upon some particular passage, the door opened, and Teenie would appear, with such a miserable look, to tell him she had spoiled the broth or burned the pudding, and he would be obliged to get up and comfort her.

This was amusing at first, but by-and-by he discovered that æsthetic speculations and the distresses of the kitchen did not harmonise very well; the one interrupted the other grievously. He began to fidget; he blamed himself much for the lack of that philosophic calm which sustains the mind in equal poise, no matter what winds are blowing, or what seas are rolling.

He was obliged to preach an old sermon on the first Sabbath after his return. That was vexatious, for he had intended to deliver a fervent discourse, which, inspired by recent happy experiences, should reach the hearts of his hearers, and help them to accept gratefully life as it was given them, good and ill together. The kirk was full; many were anxious to see the

newly-wedded couple, and to note how Teenie would conduct herself in the minister's pew.

Walter felt that he had lost an opportunity ; and, to make matters worse, one of the elders recognised the sermon as one he had heard before. He was much scandalised at this backsliding of the young minister, and resolved to take him to task for it at as early a date as possible.

Walter had occasion to call upon this elder. Mr. Pettigrew was in a comparatively large way of business. On one side of his shop he was a grocer, cheesemonger, and licensed to sell wines and spirits, to be drunk off the premises. Very drouthy customers who wished to drink at once, had only to go round to the back, and they were served with the half-mutchkin, or whatever they might require, through the back window, outside which they could drink and be merry, whilst Mr. Pettigrew obliged his friends, obeyed the letter of the law, and maintained a clear conscience. On the other side of his shop the elder was a draper, boot-seller, cabinet-maker, and undertaker, not to mention a minor trade in song-books and newspapers.

Mr. Pettigrew was a successful merchant (all the shopkeepers are called merchants). He had brought to perfection the art of attracting customers by presents of sweeties to the children. He was tall, comfortable-looking ; had a white fatty face, decorated with short grey whiskers ; he had a text ready for every occasion ; he was much respected ; and he was a martyr to his anxiety about other people's business. Whatever happened in the "town," Mr. Pettigrew was sure to know all about it, and he gave his customers the benefit of his knowledge pledging each to profound secrecy.

"Step ben this way, minister. I'm proud to see you, sir, and I take it kindly, your coming so soon after you got settled. And how is the mistress ?"

He led the way into a little parlour at the back, talking all the time in quite a friendly way—his voice was fatty like his face—and as if that old sermon were not uppermost in his thoughts. He had mentioned the sermon to a dozen customers privately.

He placed glasses and a decanter on the table. Walter declined any refreshment at that time of day.

"Oh, but you maun take something on this your first visit,

Mr. Burnett. I canna let you away without taking salt, so to speak, with me," said Mr. Pettigrew, producing a black bottle with a red seal, then hunting about for a corkscrew, which at length he found.

Then placing the point of the corkscrew upon the cork of the bottle—without breaking the seal, however—he looked at his visitor with the most hospitable expression of which his face was capable, saying—

"You'll take some of the very best sherry wine, sir? Just say the word, and I will pu't" (pull it—draw the cork)—"but I *will* pu't!"

And he made desperate pantomime, as if about to insert the the corkscrew. Walter again protested his disinclination to take anything just then, and Mr. Pettigrew became the more vehement as the other became more decisive.

"But I *will* pu't; the best sherry wine; only say the word, minister, and I will pu't."

The same bottle and the same pantomime had often done Mr. Pettigrew good service, obtaining for him credit for hospitality without expense, for he always insisted that his guest should "say the word."

"Aweel, since you winna, there's no more to be said," observed Mr. Pettigrew, with every appearance of chagrin borne with Christian resignation.

They proceeded to business, which was to discuss the necessity of certain repairs in the church, and a joint movement of minister and elders upon the heritors to obtain the requisite concessions. They had sundry little disputes about what was necessary and what was not; they agreed upon various points, and their conversation came to a close without the elder having referred to the particular subject in which he was at the moment interested. But as Walter was taking his leave, the elder coughed and said in a considerate tone—

"I hope, Mr Burnett, you're no meaning to give us that same sermon ower often—the afternoon one I mean. There is naething to say against it, but we can have ower muckle even of a good sermon; and I take the privilege of age to mention the matter to you.

Walter's cheeks burned, for indeed he had a sharp sense that he had not done his duty.

"I thought it better to give you a discourse which had been carefully prepared, than one hurriedly and therefore badly prepared. But you shall not hear it again, Mr. Pettigrew."

"There's not a word to say against it, mind, only I thought it my duty to mention it to you."

"Thank you."

Apart from this disagreeable reference to the sermon, there was something about the whole interview with the elder which depressed the young minister. There was a coarseness and earthiness in the subjects of their discussion, and the manner of them, which dissatisfied him, chiefly with himself. And so, as time went on, he found that the great work of which he had vaguely dreamed was interrupted and interfered with by the most trivial circumstances—or what seemed to him trivial circumstances. Slowly he became aware that the question of mere existence, the petty problems of the ways and means of bread-and-butter, stood between men and the higher sense of religion—and the bread-and-butter came always first in their thoughts.

He found that his attention was to be distracted by the pettiest of disputes; that he was expected to be the peacemaker often in drunken brawls; and that he was to keep a strict watch upon the manner of the Sabbath observance. Although these things were urged upon him only by a small section of his congregation, he had not acquired the art of satisfying these bigots, and yet leaving freedom to others. One poor woman, the small window of whose cottage had been transformed into a shop by filling it with cheap toys, dusty bottles full of lozenges and tin trays full of treacle-balls and candy, was brought up before the bailie for the heinous offence of selling sweeties on the Sabbath. The woman pleaded use and wont, but she could not deny her guilt, for there was an elder who had himself purchased a pennyworth of candy in order to prove the charge!

The minister made an appeal on behalf of the poor woman—he even dared to excuse her!—and from that day forth a number of his parishioners looked upon him with fear and horror as a man of dangerous, if not altogether heterodox, opinions. He was not sound in the matter of sweeties.

He accepted the position: it was his work to make the best of things as they stood—to excite the noblest aspirations of

those who came under his influence, and to point the way to true faith, which implies courage and hope. That was his work: he would do it.

But after a while there came to him, with painfully slow steps, the knowledge that the trifles of life have more influence upon it than the heroic deeds of action or suffering which may distinguish it. Petty debts accumulated until they assumed proportions which startled and frightened him—all the more so as despite wild efforts on his part, he could find no way of satisfying or reducing them. Nobody pressed him for money, but the sense of owing it was none the less keen to him. He smarted under it, and he was shamed by it; soul and mind seemed to be weighted by the vulgar needs of filling the inside and covering the back. How slow he was to recognise the commonplace conditions of existence! But he did recognise them at length, and he accepted them like the rest, bravely. It was a struggle with him at first, and he felt as if something of the better part of his nature had been sacrificed in the struggle.

He was disappointed; yet he clung to the ideal he had formed, feeling the more need to exalt it, and keep it steadily before him, since he found that the grosser elements of nature were so strong in their influence upon our ways.

Teenie was disappointed too, although she did not realize so clearly the source of her disappointment. She found the household worries very trying to her patience and her temper. She was often irritable, and she took an almost wicked satisfaction in provoking her husband, until he would leave the house and take a long fierce walk along the shore to calm himself. She was always sorry, always very penitent, and ready to take all the blame to herself; but she was also ready to repeat the cruel experiment, forgetting the past. The making-up was very sweet, certainly, but it was costly.

Day by day the old craving for the mysterious something which lay beyond the horizon line of sea and land came back to her, and slowly grew upon her until it developed into an unspoken discontent with the routine of her life.

She did not say to herself that she was dissatisfied; but she knew that she was impatient, that she did not find pleasure in her household work as she ought to do: and at times she was very angry with herself for that, and for a day or two she would

work with an almost savage energy at anything that fell to her hand to do. She would be quieter and blither for a week afterwards, only regretting that there was not enough for her to do. She was very sorry, and almost cried with vexation, to find that she could not take an interest in her husband's sermons and his books. They had very cosy evenings when they sat chatting together, or may be playing at cards—chess she could not acquire. But when he read to her she found it difficult to keep awake, and she performed all sorts of pretty manoeuvres to conceal her yawns, and to convince him that her eyes were wide open. At last she would get up, unable to endure the torture longer, put her arms round his neck, make faces at him, pinch his ears, and maybe kiss him, whilst she begged him to put the book away and talk to her.

"I wonder whether it should be regarded as a compliment or not, Teenie," he said laughing, "that you think I talk better than I read."

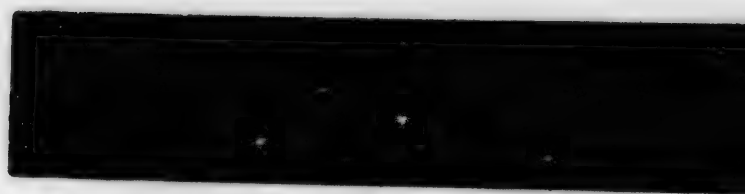
"You read such dry things."

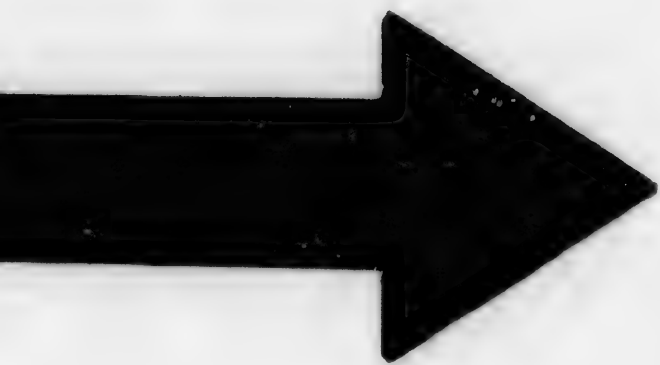
"I thought this was interesting; but it is wonderful what an effect reading has in contrast with the poorest conversation. I remember once when my father was ill, he could not get sleep: I used to take down Blair's Sermons and read—and he went off immediately."

"Try the same plan with me when I'm sleepless," said Teenie gleefully.

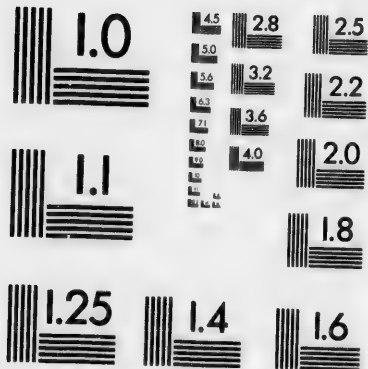
Travels or ballads she would listen to eagerly, and she would lay aside her sewing or knitting that she might give the closer attention. Then her bonnie face would brighten, and her lips part, as she bent forward in growing interest with the progress of the narrative. When he had finished she would sit silent, dreamily realizing the wonders she had heard about.

But as his work became more troublesome—as the necessities of his position pressed closer upon him—he became more and more involved in his tasks. The readings for mere amusement became fewer; his leisure hours shorter; and as she could not find interest in his work, her fits of restlessness became more frequent. She had boundless energy, and as it could not be directed into the common channels of their life, it was rapidly developing into general discontent with herself and everything around her. She flatly refused to take a class in the Sabbath





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school : in fact because she had a timid fear of her own incapacity ; but pride would not allow her to say that. She said that she could not and would not, and when Walter was at length obliged to say that his wife was unable to take a class—it caused him a sharp pain about which he said nothing—there were many unpleasant looks cast at the minister's wife. That did not help her to any more gracious mood.

When she felt very wicked, as she called her queer humour to herself, she would steal down to the Witch's Bay, take out the small boat, and have a cruise out to sea or round by the rocks. The beautiful colours of the water, glancing under the noonday sun, or flashing brilliant crimson and purple in the sunset, delighted her. The roar of the waves, the plashing against the rocks or lapping against the boat, the foaming crests curling and leaping towards her, were very pleasing to her, and the rolling movement of the boat soothed her. Sometimes Walter would accompany her on these excursions, but more frequently she went alone, unknown even to Ailie, who was now sole mistress at the Norlan' Head, and still Teenie's closest friend. She had no confidante, for she had nothing to confide. She was herself still quite innocent of all knowledge of the dangerous issues to which her restless spirit and vague yearnings were leading her.

Skipper Dan was fitting out a vessel for a whaling expedition. It had come into his head that for Teenie's sake he ought to increase his store, and that combined with his sense of the loneliness of his home to urge him to carry out the idea which had occurred to him when he had first thought of her going away from the Norlan' Head. The old spirit of adventure seized upon him, and he entered into the work with an enthusiasm which increased daily as he saw the preparations of the *Christina*, as he called the ship, nearing completion. The vessel almost took the place in his thoughts which his daughter had occupied before her marriage. Early and late he was near her, admiring her build, her "lines," and everything about her, and filled with joyful pride when any one else expressed similar admiration.

"Is she no bonnie?" he said to a Kingshaven tailor who met him at the harbour, "did you ever see finer lines in any boat that sails the sea?"

The man looked, and then answered cautiously—

"I canna say, Dan ; she's no painted yet."

Dan turned away in silent contempt.

Teenie was often down viewing her namesake. She took the interest of a child—or a lover—in the progress of the ship, and she longed to be a man, that she might have accompanied her father on his expedition. If he would have allowed her, and if her husband had consented, she would have found the utmost satisfaction in going with the *Christina*, and would have delighted in all the hardships and dangers of the voyage. But of course such an idea was not to be entertained for a moment, and she was sorry.

The next best thing to going with the vessel was to be aboard it as often as possible, and she became as well known to the ship-wrights and the other men as her father. She found an excellent vent for her surplus energy in seeing to the fitting-up of Dan's cabin. He scoffed at her arrangements, and at the woman's luxuries which she insisted upon introducing ; but it pleased her, and so he submitted, as he had submitted to so many other things.

At length the season had come round ; the *Christina* was ready for sea—all her stores and hands complete. She was towed out of harbour, cheered and well-wished by a crowd of fishermen, women, and children, who had gathered on the quay to watch the departure.

Teenie and Walter were on board, intending to return with the steam-tug. Ailie did not go, for she thought it was just as easy parting on dry land as on sea, and "a heap more comfortable."

So they moved out across the bar, past the fearful Wrecker, and the *Christina* stood out upon a clear course. Then came the parting.

"The tug leaves us here," said Dan, as if it were the most ordinary affair in the world.

But when Teenie rested her hands upon his shoulders, and looked into his face so fondly and so frightenedly, so unlike her old self, Dan felt uncomfortable. Walter and all the men were looking at him.

"You'll come back, father?"

"Of course, sea and the Lord permitting."

"Aye, but you'll take care——"

"Hoots! do you think I'm a bairn, or that I'm weary o' life? I'll take care, never you heed; but if it's the Lord's will we should go to the boddom, we canna help that."

He spoke as if she had been finding fault with him unnecessarily or foolishly.

"I wish I was going with you," she said laughing, partly in jest, but a great deal more in earnest, as she glanced along the vessel, noted her trim decks, and saw the stalwart seamen, brisk and merry at their posts.

"See what your guidman would say to that," retorted the skipper.

"He would say that he can't spare her," said Walter, taking her by the hand to lead her away.

"I would hope sae," commented Dan, after giving some directions to his mate. "Now then, awa' wi' you; the boat's waiting, and there's a fair wind that we maun tak' our use of. Wish us luck, Teenie, for I'm going to make siller for you, lass, and we'll come home with the Bank o' England in our hold."

"Good-bye, father," she said simply, as she kissed him, and he looked rather ashamed of that natural sign of affection.

"Pleasant times till I come back," he said quietly, then gripping Walter's hand, he added "Be guid till her."

"Never doubt that."

They went over the side, and on board the tug. They were carried safely into Kingshaven harbour. Teenie was quiet; there was not the least indication of hysteria in her manner. If she had parted with her father for the evening only, sure of meeting him in the morning, she could not have been more calm outwardly.

But her heart was full of strange fears, such as she had never known before. Formerly she had parted with him, even when he had been going on a similar voyage, without the least sense of dread. Now she felt as if they had parted for the last time, and she seemed to realize a portion at least of the dangers he had to encounter. She became sensible then how rapidly her nature seemed to have changed, although her husband stood beside her, she felt lonely and ay.

Dan had seemed almost gruff in his parting; but he watched

the tug with yearning eyes until it disappeared from sight. He answered the last faint signal which Tecnie made with her handkerchief, waving his hat to her. Then all seemed to become blank. His eyes became unaccountably dim, and he turned and cursed the mate heartily for some fancied neglect of his command.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BABY.

IN the pleasant May-time a baby was born at the manse, and Teenie was very ill. Trees and flowers were brilliant with brown and green buds just bursting into life ; the birds sang a merry woodland chorus, and the sea swept inward with a grand bass sough that told of storm and peril.

At one time she was so ill that the doctor looked grave, and professed himself unable to predict the result. That was a very bad sign, for the doctor was not one who ever doubted his own skill ; he only doubted nature.

Happily, Teenie was unconscious during the period of her chief danger. She did not know how Walter wandered through the house, and round the house outside, in anguish on her account, and praying for her safety. She did not know how Grace had come over from Craighburn to nurse her ; how she sat by her day and night, ready at the least sign to supply her with soothing drinks, and to calm her delirium with loving words and the gentle touch of a faithful hand.

She did not know what wild things she had been saying—some of them striking Grace very sharply—how she had jumbled together the names of Walter, Da'mahoy, her father, and her nurse ; and how she had uttered in her frenzy the wish she had never clearly realized to herself—that she might be allowed to go away in the *Christina*, to sail to strange regions, and never come back to stand between Walter and Grace.

This was heard only by the nurse ; and she was careful to keep the door close. She became the more confirmed in her resolution that no one but herself should be permitted to attend the invalid. She was used to nursing, she was accustomed to spend many nights in a chair by her mother's bedside, and so was the best qualified to take care of Teenie, as she was the most interested in preventing others from hearing the young wife's ravings.

Ailie would have relieved her ; but Grace insisted that she had enough to do in taking care of Baby—a fine healthy boy, with lungs of the very strongest quality. Mysie Keith came over expressly as an experienced nurse, to offer her services. Grace thanked her, and said she would be glad to have her when the delirium had passed off. As for Walter, he was peremptorily excluded from the room, except when Teenie was in a sound sleep. At the first sign of awakening, Grace bundled him out at the door.

One night—fire and lamp burning brightly, Grace sitting with elbow on the table, brow resting on hand, an open book before her which she was not reading, and Teenie sleeping more peacefully than she had done since the birth of Baby—Grace became instinctively conscious of a change. Her thoughts, sad and far away, seemed to be drawn back by spiritual influence to the room and the duties she was performing.

She lifted her head and found the big wondering eyes of Teenie fixed upon her with an expression of puzzled curiosity, and she knew that the crisis was past.

"What's wrong ?" said Teenie, as if the whole trouble were associated with somebody else.

Grace was beside her, holding her hand, feeling her pulse, smoothing her brow, and trembling with joy.

"You have not been well, Teenie, and we have been very anxious about you."

"About me ? What was the matter ?" said the invalid in a faint tone, and laughing feebly at the idea of her having been very ill—she who had never known a day's sickness.

"You have been very ill, and you must not excite yourself in any way. You must obey me for the present, and in the morning you shall see Walter and Baby."

"Baby ?" murmured the girl vaguely, and as if seeking to catch some will-o'-the-wisp of thought. Then a dim consciousness of what had passed seemed to dawn upon her ; the eyes brightened and the pale cheeks flushed, as she repeated tenderly and wonderingly the word "Baby !"

"You must not speak again," said Grace with gentle firmness ; "I must be very stern with you, I see. Drink this, and do not attempt to move or utter a word, or I shall be very angry."

Teenie obeyed quite humbly. She had not moved her head

from the pillow : but Grace felt that, wherever she moved, the big, unnaturally bright eyes followed her with strange questioning looks, noted every turn she made, and speculated what she would do next. In the stillness of the night the consciousness of those eyes became painful to her. She wished that Teenie would go to sleep, or turn her face to the wall ; she felt inclined to talk, although it was in direct opposition to the doctor's commands ; by-and-by she felt ready to do anything that would break the charm which these sad questioning eyes wrought upon her, and she had to make a strong effort in order to remain silent.

In a very little while, Teenie, lying there motionless watching her nurse, understood the whole position as well as if she had been conscious all the time. Grace had been nursing her through a dangerous illness—had probably rescued her from death by devoted care—and there she was, quite a helpless, useless creature, apparently doomed always to give trouble and anxiety to those who loved her, whilst she could never find the least opportunity to render them a service in return.

She felt so miserable and worthless ; and she thought that the very best service she could render to everybody would be to remain quiet and die. Then something seemed to whisper "Baby" in her ear, and her pulses quickened with life whilst her eyes filled with tears for which she could not account at all. Only she knew that she would not like to die.

"Grace !"

That lady was startled by the low pathetic cry which filled the room ; it was one of the rare occasions upon which Teenie had called her by her Christian name ; generally she avoided naming her altogether.

Grace was kneeling by the bedside, and Teenie looking wistfully into her face.

"I wonder how you manage it, Grace," she said faintly.

"Manage what ?"

"To forget yourself the way you do—I couldn't do it. If you had been me I couldn't have come to nurse you and save you as you have done to me. I must be awfully bad."

And she looked helplessly frightened at the sense of her own iniquity.

"My dear, silly child, you would do a great deal more than ever I have done for anybody you liked."

"And you do like me?"

"Very much."

"That's queer."

Teenie moved her head for the first time, as if the problem required a change of position to be solved.

"Why queer?"

"You don't know the spiteful way I think of you whiles—just because I know you are so good, and true, and brave. Whiles I wish you were at the other end of the world—or me; then I think it would be better for me to be away, because you would make him so happy and ——"

She went no further; her voice, weak at the best, seemed to be stifled with subdued sobs.

"Oh, Teenie, Teenie! why do you speak of this?—you are making me very wretched.

"I don't want to do that—for I like you, Grace, I like you a great heap."

Grace kissed her affectionately—that was the only reply she could make—and then she implored her to be silent.

"You must not speak of these things—you must not think of them, and you must go to sleep,"

"Get Wattie to come and read me one of his sermons if you want me to go to sleep," she said with a faint twinkle of her old humour.

She seemed to be so much better that Grace for an instant hesitated whether or not she would summon Walter; she knew that he was in his "workshop," trying to read whilst awaiting the report of any change for the worse. But the danger of exciting the patient beyond her strength was too great; and so she took her chair again, pretending to fall asleep, in the hope that Teenie might rest.

Then there was that strange noisy silence that is felt in the night when two people are wide awake, and each trying to keep quiet in order not to disturb the other. The little clock on the mantelpiece made an extraordinary din; the wind seemed to roar round the house, although it was a calm night; a branch of a rose-bush tapped on the window with irritating loudness and constancy; even their pulses seemed to be heard.

There was a grand crimson glow on the window, one of the panes glistened with prismatic lights, the lamp and fire faded, and they knew it was morning. It was a grateful relief to both, and each thought that the other had rested comfortably owing to the cunning way she had feigned sleep.

Grace administered the morning dose of medicine and then she went for Walter. He came in looking weary and haggard enough, but so joyful with the news conveyed to him, that he looked flushed and happy as he embraced his wife.

"What a fright you have given us, Teenie!" he said, husky with pleasure.

"Did I?—I'm awful sorry."

Then the cause of all the trouble—Baby—was introduced: a fat, plump, rosy boy, utterly indifferent to everything and everybody. He was placed in the bed beside his mother, and he kicked and squalled lustily.

"He couldna be stronger if he was six months auld," exclaimed Ailie proudly and admiringly.

"What a funny wee ted!" said the mother, half laughing and half crying.

But when the doctor came he damped the joy of the household, for he found his patient terribly weak; he declared that she had been excited far beyond her strength, and he would not be answerable for the result. If she lived, it would not be due to his skill—and that was the first time Dr. Lumsden had ever made such an admission.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE SUNSHINE.

IT was a hard fight, but, as Ailie said, she "warstled through wonderful." Youth and a healthy constitution were good allies; and so the doctor, who had regarded the case with such gloomy apprehensions, was able to take credit to himself for one of the most remarkable rescues in the annals of medicine. Indeed, he wrote to the *Lancet* on the subject, and ceased his subscription to that journal from the date on which his contribution had been declined with thanks.

By-and-by Teenie was able to sit out in the garden, oppressed almost with shawls and cloaks to protect her from the keen breeze. She would sit looking at Baby being nursed by Ailie or Grace—she was too weak to hold him often herself. He was a perpetual wonder to her: his smiles were glorious; his howls and kicks were inexpressibly comic.

The state of his mother's health rendered it necessary that Baby should be brought up on "the bottle," and he took to his milk with splendid appetite, showing no interest whatever even in the grave discussion as to what name he should bear.

It was a very grave discussion, renewed many times. Teenie and Grace had consulted endless lists of names at the ends of dictionaries and elsewhere; numberless grand names were proposed, but objections were found to all, and they came back to the point from which they started, that they must call him after one or both of his grandfathers. But Hugh was not a nice name, and Daniel, with its unavoidable contraction into Dan, was almost ugly. Walter was not bad, but they were desirous of giving precedence to the old people.

"I wish he had been a lassie," said Teenie thoughtfully.

"Why so?" asked her husband.

"Because then it would have been easy enough to settle his name—we would have called him Grace."

"I would have liked that very much," said Grace; "but as he is a boy, we must give him a boy's name."

Finally, it was agreed that he should be baptized Daniel Hugh, although there was a unanimous conviction that it was not a good combination.

Teenie grew stronger as days passed, and she was able to take long drives with Walter in the Dalmahoy gig which was sent over to the manse for her benefit. It was a delight to her to lean back, and stare about her and before her, feeling the pleasant breeze beating upon her cheeks, and inhaling strength at every step the horse made. Walter was beside her, and she was very happy, although she was often dreaming of the great sea—no land visible—waves rolling high, and the *Christina* tossing upon their foamy crests. Then she would look round upon the pleasant landscape, and wish that her father were with her.

There was the bright yellow corn, delicately tipped and tinged with green, waving and murmuring under the wind; at intervals there were groups of cots with white or reddish clay-coloured walls, covered with ancient thatch, moss-grown in parts, the rest embrowned by age and weather; or striped with earth-patches where the peasant had been repairing the roof.

Presently they would drive along the bank of a gurgling stream, where a band of boys, who had probably raced there from the school, were romping about, in well-patched clothes, with bare feet and with breeks—when they had breeks—rolled up to the thigh, whilst they waded in the water, in their hands very primitive rods—made of a branch, a bit of twine, and a bent pin—fishing for minnows. Others were rolling down the bank, in the simple enjoyment of mere life and freedom from school.

On the other side of the stream was a light green meadow, which had been closely cropped by sheep and cattle; beyond it a rich golden plain of full ripe barley, studded with stooks just cut; this plain was backed by the deep green of a turnip-field, and beyond that was a purple moorland seen through scattered trees of dusky green, fading into a blue-black background of plantation which formed a dark line on the horizon. Overhead, the sky clear pale blue, with fleecy clouds floating lazily eastward, forming into grotesque shapes fringed with bright silver and gold where the sunlight flashed upon them.

She was unspeakably happy in all this sunshine, although

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she was so weak and helpless. The brightness of the earth seemed to reproach her for certain dark and half-acknowledged wishes that she might be taken away then in order to allow Grace to be happy. The world was very beautiful, and Walter was very kind, and she clung to both with desperate fondness. No, she could not give them up, although Grace was so good, and must be so miserable.

She was regaining strength rapidly; every day she felt better and looked better. During this period she became aware of the many signs of kindly interest in her welfare which were made by people whom she did not know, and to whom she had never spoken a word, as well as by those whom she did know. Friendly inquiries were made for her daily, and little offerings were left at the manse by rich and poor.

"The house is just bock fu' of jeellies and wines," exclaimed Ailie. "I dinna ken how they'll ever manage to get through it all."

"There's a great deal more kindness and goodness in the world than we fancy," Teenie said to her husband one morning, when she began to realize all the stir and anxiety her illness had awakened in the district.

One of the most devoted of Teenie's friends was Habbie Gowk. Throughout the period of her illness he was at Drumliemount some time in the course of each day, always with a bunch—a "babb," he called it—of wild flowers; and when he learned that she was up, and able to speak to those about her, the flowers were frequently accompanied by "A Morning Salutation," in verse of course, written on large blue letter-paper, in a big text-hand.

Walter was rather vexed to discover in the course of these visits that Habbie's face looked somewhat haggard, his eyes restless, and his clothes unusually tattered. Even Beattie seemed to have grown thin, and to wear a dejected look. The happy spirit of the poet seemed to have vanished; his loud laugh was never heard, and all his pawky ways of pressing the sale of his ballads were forgotten. He was a man oppressed with cares, the weight of which even his donkey felt.

Teenie and Walter were at the door, she seated between the roses and honeysuckle, he leaning against the porch. Habbie dismounted at the gate, left Beattie to browse at the roadside, and advanced.

"I am blithe to see you, mistress," he said, with hearty goodwill, "and I hope it'll be long or you ever ken such trouble again. You'll no care for this now."

He uttered this last sentence a little ruefully as he looked at the wild flowers he carried, and which this time, moved by some curious fancy, he had encircled with a ring of pink and yellow sea-ferns, binding the whole with a broad band of thick brown sea-weed.

"It's bonnie, Habbie," she cried, with almost childish pleasure, as she took the "babb" and held it up admiringly, "and it was just uncommon kind of you to think about them. This brings me to the woods and sea. Thank you, Habbie; I feel better and stronger looking at them."

"I'm glad, mistress, that they please you," he said simply.

"But what's wrong with you, Habbie?" she exclaimed, observing his altered appearance; "have you been poorly too?"

"No, no just poorly, but——"

He stopped, awkward, conscious of the very dilapidated condition of his wardrobe, and ashamed of being there.

"What is it Habbie?" said Walter good-naturedly; "you are not the man you used to be. What has happened to you?"

The poet made a wry face, and scratched his touzled head.

"It's that fortune," he said, with a faint perception of the ludicrous contrast between his appearance and the cause to which he attributed it. "That—um—that siller Geordie Methven left; it's put a' thing wrang."

"How so?"

"I promised no to speak about it, but I winna hold my tongue longer. I wish I had gone to the Laird when he said I might go; but the writer Currie threatened me no to speak to mortal man, or he would drop the case; and so I was feared to speak, and it's just been a millstone round my neck. It's waur nor the gaswork yet."

"But if you are the heir, as Currie tells you, there should be no need for secrecy of any kind."

"I think Currie's a—beg your pardon, mistress; I'll no call any names in your presence; and I dinna ken that I should mention the matter here of all places, for you are both interested parties."

Walter and Teenie laughed.

"Don't be afraid of us, Habbie," he said ; " we have not the least notion of contesting your claim to the fortune."

"It's no that I'm feared about ; I would be glad if it came to you ; but Currie gar'd me sign a paper giving him power to do what he likes, and he's kept me on waiting and waiting, day after day, expecting that the business would be settled, and I would find myself a man of fortune. But every morning there's this plea, and that plea, and one delay, and another delay, until I'm clean worried out of my judgment wi' expectations that come to naething. Yet I canna gi'e up the chance. The craving for the siller seems to ha'e grippit me, and I can do naething but dream about it, waking and sleeping, and I wish to the Lord I had never heard about it. I can hardly keep from calling him ill names, even in your presence, mistress, when I mind what fine times Beattie and me had afore I ken'd that there was a chance o' my heiring a fortune. It's fair ruination."

He was much excited in giving this story of his troubles, and there was a pathetic sigh in his voice as he lamented the happy days when he had been a contented vagrant.

"You should place the business in the hands of another lawyer, if you think Currie is not acting justly," said Walter, deeply interested.

"Aye, but though, what better would I be ? I ken nothing of the business, and the thing has grown upon me in such a way that I'm feared to do anything that might lose a chance ; for I canna go back to the time when I never thought about it ; I canna be as I was. I feel now as if the siller was really mine ; and if it's decided that I have no claim till't, it will be just as bad as though they took it out of my pouch. I ken it's laughable that a ragged, guid-for-nothing creature like me should even himsel' to be heir to millions, but it was put in my head, and I canna drive it out."

"But what is the difficulty in your case ?"

"As far as I can make it out, it's just this : My mother was one of the auld wife Methven's daughters, but I was born in an out-of-the-way place in the Orkneys, and they canna prove that I'm the son of my mother. Whiles I'm tempted to run away from the whole affair, but then I come back hoping and hoping, and syne I take the dram just to forget myself, or to feel as blithe as though I'd come into the fortune. But I'll no

weary you any more. I'll speak to the Laird ; he kens the law, and maybe he can help me. Guid day, mistress, and I wish you had the siller, though I'm no sure it's a good wish."

"I'll speak to my father too, Habbie, and if we can help you we will."

"Thank you, sir ; it's kind o' you, but I'm doubtful."

He went away, refusing to have anything to eat (he was not offered anything to drink). He did not go to Dalmahoy that day however. He visited his acquaintances, got a dram here and a dram there, rarely saying a word about his fortune, but feeling his burden lighten with each successive dram. Finally he found himself in the evening seated in a cosy room at the inn, surrounded by a group of fishers, mostly young men, who looked upon him as a kind of butt for their frequently rude mirth, at the same time feeling a vague respect for him as a poet, and as the possible heir to the boundless wealth of the late George Methven. He told stories and sang his songs, his glass was kept well filled, and he was as happy as if he had obtained the fortune, or had never heard of it.


Somehow he reached his lodging, and during the night he roused his landlady, shouting—

"Tibbie! Tibbie, woman! I'm that dry ; fetch in the well !"

His miseries returned to him in the morning.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN THE SHADE.

"HAT fortune is a shuttlecock," said Walter next day, as he was preparing to go out ; " everybody seems to have a game with it, and to feel much the worse for the amusement. It was lucky we never had anything to do with it."

" Yes, it was lucky," Teenie thought, and at the same time she remembered what Dalmahoy had told her when trying to persuade her not to marry his son. It was curious that Walter seemed to have so entirely forgotten it.

He left her in his room ; he had to pay a number of visits to his parishioners, and then he was going on to Dalmahoy. She had to arrange for him some old papers, which were untidily packed in a deal box he had brought with him from college. She was in a dreamy mood to-day, but the task before her was simple and interesting, for it would help her to realize his life during his student days.

There were old essays which he had written as exercises in his classes, or for the debating society to which he had belonged ; his first attempts at sermon-writing ; scraps of sermons and rough notes suggestive of other sermons ; the letters of old college comrades, and some wild squibs and caricatures written during the contest for the election of the Lord Rector.

They were very amusing sign-posts of the past, and Teenie felt quite merry in going over them. There were many ridiculous things to laugh at, and to tease him about hereafter ; many indications of wild notions which were as unlike the quiet resolute man who was her husband, as if they had been written by another person altogether. What a transformation there was from the youth to the man ! and yet he had always seemed the same to her. She wondered if other people had noted the change which had escaped her eyes.

There was one more bundle of papers—letters, tied with

thick cord and crushed into a corner. The handwriting was a lady's. She opened the letters with a peculiar feeling of curiosity—a mingling of merry anticipations of something more to tease him about, with a touch of regret that his past had not been all hers.

They were Grace's letters, written to him whilst he was studying in Edinburgh, or during his absence on some excursion in the Highlands.

Although there was a smile on her face, her heart beat fast, and then fluttered feebly as if she were in the dark, conscious of the presence of some indefinable danger. She hesitated to read them; she felt that it would be wrong to do so, and she began slowly to retie the bundle.

It was very careless of him not to have destroyed them; most negligent of him to forget that they were in this box when he asked her to arrange its contents. Perhaps it was not owing to negligence that he had left the letters there, but because he knew that they did not contain anything which she might not see?

She paused, pondering that question.

The sophistry of the wife's curiosity prevailed. She untied the bundle of letters again and read them. One by one the letters were taken out of the envelopes, read, and replaced.

She did not think of the pain Grace would have suffered, had it become known to her that those letters had fallen into other hands than Walter's; but she did think that he had been cruel in not destroying them. Or was it possible that he could have been so blind and dull, that he had not felt the yearning woman's heart throbbing in every word and every line? Here was the revelation of a love so strong that under its grand halo nothing he could do seemed wrong; so self-forgetful that Teenie partly understood now how Grace could love him and yet surrender him to another.

The foibles which he confessed in his letters to Grace were treated with tender partiality; the little tokens of success which he was able to announce were hailed and magnified with loving enthusiasm; the few conventional words of affection which he wrote were received with eager gratitude. How utterly submissive to his pleasure was this woman; how grand he must have appeared in her eyes: and how cruelly unconscious he must have been to it all!

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Teenie felt that her love was very poor indeed compared to that of Grace; yet he was her husband, and Grace still loved him, and was able to care for his wife.

She could not understand it at all: she thought there was a mistake somewhere. She was not given to tears, but she bowed her head over that sad record of a disappointed affection, and cried bitterly—not for herself. There was no jealousy, no angry feeling in her heart now; there was nothing but piteous regret that she had marred the happiness of one who deserved it so much better than she did. Why, why was it that one so good and generous as Grace was, should have to suffer, whilst she, a weak useless creature, should have her wishes granted?

She asked the question almost fiercely; and then she felt afraid—felt that she had done something unpardonably wicked, and, sobbing, wished that she had never been born, since she was the cause of sorrow when she wished most to give joy.

What agony Grace must have endured; and how bravely she had concealed it.

Teenie dried her eyes, irritated with herself for such weakness, and then, very tenderly, tied up those old letters. Holding the bundle in her hand, dazed with strange thoughts and self-accusations, and her heart aching, she tried to think what she could do to relieve Grace. Nothing, absolutely nothing; she must just sit still with the knowledge of all the sorrow entailed upon one whose life was blameless, without even the privilege of telling her that she shared her pain.

She replaced the letters in the box, and turned away from them. Since she could do nothing she would try to forget them: but she could not.

Walter found his wife looking much paler than she had done when he went out in the forenoon, and she was much weaker too.

"You have been wearying yourself," he said anxiously, and fearful of a relapse; "you should not have overtaxed your strength. What a stupid fellow I am, to have allowed you to attempt anything just now!"

He poured out her medicine, and tried to make her more comfortable in the chair. He moved about rapidly, performing all those little affectionate offices which relieve an invalid.

Her big dreamy eyes followed his every movement with a

strange eager look in which there was much sadness. She noted that, although he was trying to hide it from her, there were signs of agitation on his face and in his manner. Had he remembered about the letters, and was he vexed to think that she had seen them?

When he had done everything he could think of to relieve her, and stood by the chair anxiously watching her, she looked up at him with a quiet smile.

"I'm better now, Wattie; I'm always better when you are beside me," she said; "I'm getting strong fast—but what is the matter with you?"

He was disturbed by the question, and looked grave as he took her hand, patting it gently with his own.

"I suppose it's better to tell you at once than allow you to worry yourself wondering what it can be. My father is in serious difficulties, and——"

He stopped, for the words he had been about to utter—"he blames me"—would have vexed her. So he said quietly—

"And I do not see how to help him."

"But what are the difficulties?"

"Money—money—and money," he answered, trying to speak lightly.

"Is that all?"

He smiled at the question, and was thankful she had so little experience of that terrible condition, the want of money, whether it be little or much.

"Yes, that is all."

"Then we can help him—my father will do it for us."

Her face brightened, and she felt almost glad of this calamity which enabled her to be of some use. But Walter shook his head, as if her hopes were quite vain.

"Your father will not be home in time, and if he should be, I do not think he could advance the sum required—seven thousand pounds."

"Eh!" cried Teenie, in despair; if he had said seven millions she would not have been more startled. She only knew that he had mentioned a sum too large for her wildest fancies to realize.

"How could the Laird make away with such a heap of money?"

"He says it made away with itself. At any rate the money

was borrowed on the security of Dalmahoy, house and grounds, and it was spent. The Laird was not much afraid of being unable to repay the money when called upon, and was sure that at the worst he could renew the loan ; for Mrs. Dunlop, from whom he borrowed, was one of his oldest friends. But several projects upon which he had counted have failed ; Mrs. Dunlop is dead, and her heir has just served my father with a terrible document called a 'Schedule of Intimation and Protest,' the effect of which is that, if the bond is not paid off three months hence, Dalmahoy will be sold."

There was a sort of grim satisfaction in talking thus calmly about a matter which was racking his heart with pain—a matter which meant the utter ruin of his family.

"And your father—your sisters—what will they do?"

"Who can tell?" he said, so quietly, but with a pale look which filled Teenie with dread. He was gazing down dreamily at the box of old papers, and his thoughts wandered back to the happy student days when the future seemed so clear, and his energies seemed great enough to overcome any difficulty life could present. He went on: "They cannot work, and I have no home to offer them. Droll, is it not?—there is that Methven fortune, which might make so many people happy, uselessly multiplying itself whilst a whole crowd of heirs are wrangling over it and making themselves wretched about it ; and here are we, who might be saved from misery if we could only obtain a fraction of it. I shall learn many wise lessons from that fortune, if I can only escape the mania of craving to possess it. At present I am sorely tempted to desire it for my father's sake."

He spoke in much the same tone and manner as if he were reviewing a mathematical problem, or looking curiously at some psychological puzzle. He had not the least craving for the Methven estate ; although he saw how much trouble a very small portion of it would have spared him, yet it was no more than an interesting subject for reflection to him. He was deeply distressed on his father's account ; and he had been sharply reminded that the present crisis was entirely due to his obstinacy in marrying Teenie ; if he had only fulfilled his engagement with Grace—"an engagement," said the Laird, "which your sense of honour as a gentleman should have com-

pelled you to keep, no matter what she was willing to agree to—there would have been no trouble now. There would have been plenty of means to clear Dalmahoy, and to save it from that scamp who is a mere gambler on the Exchange of Glasgow, and who is either hard pressed for money himself, or thinks this a good opportunity to set up as a landed proprietor."

"However," said the Laird finally, in his grand magnanimous way, "I've eaten my cake, and I am content ; but then I have eaten your share as well as my own, and that's awkward—for you."

His frankness and generosity were beautiful.

These things running through Walter's head, he was still unconscious of any regret that he had acted as he had done, although he could not avoid acute suffering in the knowledge that the course he had found it necessary to pursue should entail sorrow upon others. He questioned himself, had he not acted selfishly ? Then he looked at Teenie and simply answered the question—he could not help it.

At the same time he stooped down to the box of old papers ; he turned them over tenderly, and presently he came to the bundle of Grace's letters. He took it up with a glow of sweet and sad remembrance on his countenance.

"Poor Grace !" he said, handling the letters fondly ; "she was very kind to me ; I wish I could show her what an exalted place she has in my thoughts."

He was unconscious that Teenie was watching him, and that her eyes were very wide and bright.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TEENIE'S DOUBTS.

HERE was a sharp pain in Teenie's heart, and wild thoughts performing a confused dance in her brain, as she watched him handling those letters.

He was thinking about Grace evidently, and maybe he was lamenting the folly which had tempted him to marry one so useless and helpless as she was to him. She saw him in despair from which he might have been saved, if she had only been brave enough to refuse to be his wife. She saw him in sore need of help, and she was so poor—so weak that, with all her love, she could not say or do anything that might relieve him in the least degree.

Like a sudden and dense mist upon the mountain, the thought fell upon her—blinding her, stupifying her so that she did not know which way to move towards safety—that he must be sorry for having married her. It seemed as if there were a great load within her breast, bearing the once strong and upright form down to the floor.

Shading her eyes with one hand, she asked in a very low voice—

“Has the Laird no friend who will lend him the money?”

Without looking up, and his thoughts far away in the old days—how far back they seemed!—of gay youth, bright dreams, and impatient hopes, he answered—

“Our only hope is that Dame Wishart may advance it; but if she refuses, I am afraid the sale will take place.”

He drew a long breath, and she saw that his lips were compressed as if he were in pain.

There was a curious sense of silence in the place; even the wind outside seemed to pause, and the rustle of the honeysuckle against the window was not heard.

The only hope was in Dame Wishart—Grace's mother. If he had married Grace, there would have been no difficulty about

this business ; it could all have been settled quite easily, and he would have been happy. So, in her morbid broodings, she began to see how cruel she had been, how wisely the Laird had spoken, and how wickedly and selfishly she had acted. Her love was bringing to him fast the ruin and misery of which Dalmahoy had warned her. She had turned away from the warning, because he had pleaded and she loved him so, and now—

He *must* be bitterly repenting the foolish passion which had tempted him to marry her in spite of reason.

That pretty fairy story, in which she had lived for a little while, had changed into a very dull and prosaic reality. She was surrounded by struggles and difficulties which she had never known at home ; she shuddered with a cold fear that she had done wrong—that she had involved him in the wrong, and that both were now doomed to pay the penalty of the error for which she alone was to blame.

In a painful, dreamy way, she seemed to be conscious that he was fighting with a wild sea—that he was calling to her for help, and that, although quite near, she could not lift a hand to save him. The anguish to her was intense—it was like a nightmare which she tried to shake off and could not ; yet every circumstance of their position, and everything around her, was coldly distinct and sharply defined to her senses. She saw and felt everything with the supernatural vividness with which the mind is gifted in moments of great peril.

How vexed he must feel with her now ! By-and-by he would come to hate her as the cause of all his misfortunes, and poor Baby would become a trouble and an annoyance to him. If she could have foreseen—if she could have known or suspected what suffering he was to undergo on her account—she might have prevented it all, and that was the bitterest thought of the many which afflicted her. She might have prevented it all, and she would have been so glad to do so—only to save him the least pain, and, lo, she was the cause of all his pain !

Still in her dreamy state, she wished that she could have dropped into the cobbles and sailed away out upon the strange seas, no matter whither, so that she never came back to Rowanden any more—so that she might leave him free to marry Grace, and to be happy, as he would be with her. She had a

pitiful weary feeling of being all alone in the world—of being so much the enemy of those whom she loved, that they must wish her to be away ; and for their sakes she desired nothing better than to be taken off at once, and hidden out of sight, no matter where.

As her brain throbbed with these sad fancies, a big sob burst from her, and Walter started up amazed and distressed ; it was a very unusual sound to proceed from her.

"What is the matter, Teenie, my own bonnie wife—what has happened to you ?"

He placed his arm round her so tenderly, and drew her to his breast with such affectionate warmth, that but for the extravagant fancies which possessed her, she must have known how much she had wronged his thoughts. She was grateful for the touch of his hand—grateful for the loving sound of his voice ; and at the same time she experienced a twinge of pain, that he should lavish all this care upon her who had brought him so much sorrow.

"There's nothing wrong with me," she said stubbornly, and even with a degree of petulance in her fierce determination to overcome every sign of weakness. Then, sobbing in spite of herself, and wistfully, "It's an awful pity."

Her pity was for him in having married her, and so entailed upon himself all this suffering ; he attributed it to the position of his father.

"It is a pity, and it will upset the old man terribly—to be turned out of his home, to be set adrift in the world, and to begin life anew when he is so near its close—oh ! it vexes me so that I do not know what to say or think."

"But you could not help it"—timidly, and half against her will, craving for some balm for the self-accusations which were torturing her.

"No, I could not help it ; and yet, Teenie, I feel as if there were some blame due to me, and the feeling makes me smart keenly. I ought to have been able to relieve him in this crisis. Perhaps I should have been if I had followed his advice, and applied myself to engineering. That is a profitable business, once you get into the groove ; but preaching is a poor trade at the best—there are no fortunes made at it. Still, I do not feel that my choice has been a wrong one ; I have adopted a poor

trade according to the ordinary measure of success, but have I not chosen the one in which the real measure of success is largest and most substantial? It is surely a vulgar thought to measure God's love by worldly prosperity; and if that were to be the rule, it would be a sore temptation to ignorant minds to try to cheat themselves and Providence. They try it often enough as it is. I am content to be poor even when I must look on such sorrow as my father's, if I may help men to realize what is true happiness."

"If I could only help you!" she muttered, to herself rather than to him.

He looked at her, puzzled and much grieved by her white face. Still, he had no conception of the vein of thought she had fallen into, and of the cruel confirmation which his words gave to the convictions that distressed her. He smiled sadly, and tried to comfort her.

"Get well, Teenie—look happy and bright as you used to do, and then I think it will be possible even to hear the tap of the auctioneer's stick at Dalmahoy without despair. But if you go on being so unlike yourself as you are just now, I don't know how I shall stand it."

"Aye!" she cried with a wild sort of bitterness of heart—shutting her eyes and thinking of the blunders they had made—"there would have been no need for all this fash if you had only married Gr——"

He placed his hand tenderly on her mouth, a quick and painful suspicion of her feelings running through his mind, and filling him with more acute sorrow than even the knowledge of his father's distress had done; for he saw how much his careless words must have pained her, and he felt that she had not the unquestioning faith in him which he had hoped she possessed. It was a double shock to him, and very bitter.

"You are my wife," he said quietly, "and you must not think that it was possible for me to marry anybody but you, as indeed it was not, and could not be, even if I were free to make choice again to-morrow with the knowledge of all these troubles staring me in the face. I would act just as I have done, unless perhaps I had hesitated in the fear that you were not willing to share poverty and sorrow with me."

"Oh, Wattie! I would be proud of your poverty, because it

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brings you so much nearer to me. But when I see you suffering, and so many others suffering, because ——" She hesitated, and then impetuously, "because you have married me, I feel wild!"

He was startled by this passionate outcry, and strangely disturbed.

"You are all the world to me, Teenie," he said softly; "you can never guess half the happiness you have given to me, and I can never forget it, I hope."

She was looking at the floor, her face clouded by unpleasant emotions, but it was an unspeakable relief to hear his words and to mark his tone. The doubts which afflicted her were quieted, although not dispelled. She did not speak again.

From that day there was a marked change in her manner and ways. The frank, fearless girl of old times was gone, and her place was occupied by a quiet, somewhat shy, and often sad woman, whose nature was occasionally roused by undercurrents of passion, which, however, found no further expression than in the quick flash of the bright eyes—like the sea at night illumed for a minute by lightning, then dark and incomprehensible again.

Out of her very love there was a slow growth of fierce despair. She looked often across the sea, yearning towards it, thinking of her father, and speculating upon what might have happened if she had gone away with him before the marriage. Dalmahoy would have been saved, the Laird would not have despised her as he must do now, and Walter and Grace would have been so happy! Grace would have suited him so admirably; she was interested in all his work, and she would have helped him in it; he could have discussed his sermons with her; she would have taken charge of the Sunday-school, and she would have managed the soup-kitchen and the coal-fund in winter. Teenie blamed herself that she was utterly unfitted for any of these duties—at least in the way they were usually performed.

There was always in her mind the self-upbraiding cry, never a thought of blame to others. Yet at times she looked and acted as if she were angry with everybody, just because she felt so bitter towards herself. Wild, wicked feelings surged in her

breast, and they were all the more fierce because she tried so hard to conceal and suppress them.

She watched her husband with a sharp aching at her heart, and wistful eyes. As she saw the shadow of trouble deepen on his face, her despair was quickened until it seemed as if all the world were against her, and that every hope of peace was gone from their home. And she was the cause—she alone was the cause! She felt that her whole nature was changing, that her brow was becoming contracted with a constant frown, and that her heart was swelling so with pain, it must surely burst very soon.

Yet she was pitifully submissive to him, watching his every look, studying his every wish, and trying with all her might to make up to him, by her affectionate care, for the ruin which she fancied was the dowry she had brought to him. How she prayed and prayed that her father might return in time to rescue Dalmahoy! She would have him give up the last farthing he possessed for that purpose; and then if she could only disappear from the place—die perhaps—she would be satisfied.

To Grace she was more gentle, more loving than she had ever been before. Everything Grace said was as gospel to Teenie; everything Grace did she praised and admired—and it requires a good heart to be pleased with the successes of one's friends. The conviction that she had stepped into the Dalmahoy family as a sort of marplot grew upon her, until it became a sort of waking nightmare. The poor girl's heart was breaking, and her only relief was found in exceeding tenderness of thought towards those whom she fancied she had wronged; whilst often she was in appearance dour to them, and quite unsympathetic. These were the moments in which she hated herself most, in which she was longing most to discover some great sacrifice to make by which she could help them, and show how much she loved them.

When alone with Baby—the little thing laughing, crowing and kicking in the animal enjoyment of mere existence—she felt the bitterness of her position most keenly. But even when alone she rarely allowed the tears which filled her breast to find vent. She was either dour in her anguish, and would sit for

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hours watching the little one, and dreaming sad dreams, or she would be fierce in her affectionate hugging of the child, and, as with dry hot eyes she looked at him, would try to croon some of the old sad ballads, or to tell him pretty stories of gay lives, as if he could understand, and as if her heart were not bursting with pain.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FALSE STEPS.

TREENIE'S white face haunted Walter ; it became a terror to him, and added cruelly to the anxieties which at the time engaged his thoughts. He feared that she was very ill, and spoke to the doctor. Lumsden, the bailie, in his rough and hearty way, assured him there was nothing the matter ; it was just the natural effects of the birth of the baby, and she was not half so bad as many women were under the same circumstances. He prescribed cheerful conversation, good feeding, and as much open air exercise as possible—driving best.

Obedient to these directions, Walter tried to be cheerful. It was a very ghastly result, for he was in sore trouble. He knew that he made a bad show of mirth, and he was much vexed by it. But he did the next best thing, as he thought—he said never a word about the various matters which were annoying and worrying him so that he could with difficulty get up even the faint appearance of cheerfulness with which he attended her. He was very earnest in the effort, but he was very grave all the same, and in spite of himself ; for his father's prospective ruin, and various irritating petty inconveniences in his own affairs, were pressing sharply upon him. Unfortunately, he was not one of those who could take life lightly ; life was a very serious business to him, and its responsibilities not to be shirked or postponed on account of any personal sorrows or weaknesses.

She was not in the least deceived by his pretences at indifference to the way things were going. She questioned him, and he told her that all would be right by-and-by ; that she was not to trouble herself, but just devote her whole attention to getting well, and that would make him quite happy, for his chief distress was due to the fact that she was so ill. And to a certain extent he spoke absolute truth.

But she looked upon this as another sign that she was unfit to be his wife ; she regarded it as a final proof he thought so ;

and at every fresh attempt he made to hide his sorrow from her she kept murmuring to herself—

“He feels that I am the cause of all this wreck and ruin, and he will not tell me. He sees that it is my fault he is in difficulty, and he is trying to shut his own eyes to it by hiding it from me?”

So the very means which he adopted to assist her recovery retarded it. If she had only spoken out, then he would have understood, and he would have explained everything to her, or if he had only spoken out, she would have understood, she would have been spared much pain, and she would have helped him by getting well, and also by the sturdy spirit in which she took in hand those matters which were plain to her.

But each trying most earnestly to help the other, each loving the other most devoutly, and each striving hard to save the other from pain, did exactly what they wished not to do—inspired doubt and grief.

There was no foolishness on either side; each was capable of very bold and resolute action as soon as the course was visible. It was just one of those commonplace positions in which what we wish to do blinds us to what we ought to do.

He was deeply grieved that she showed no signs of improving health; she was bitterly vexed with him that he did not think her worthy of his confidence—just at the time when it would have been the greatest conceivable relief to him to have poured into her ear the whole history of his vexations, when her sympathy would have helped and strengthened him beyond measure, and when the loss of it was the greatest of all deprivations!

He tried to interest her in the events which were passing around them, but he found it difficult to get her out of the house. She had grown almost a hermit, and she could not bear to pass the garden-gate. He thought that a very bad sign, and he tried all sorts of little persuasions to induce her to go down to the village, to Kingshaven, or for a drive to the hills. She yielded, but it was only because she wished to please him; she seemed to derive neither pleasure nor benefit from these excursions.

In her present humour the number of petty aggravations which she discovered increased rapidly; the beauty of home

was fading, and by-and-by it would wither. Already the pitifully small beginnings of misunderstanding, of doubt, which if unchecked at first, develop into fierce words and distrust, had entered the house ; and yet each was striving honestly to be faithful, dutiful, and loving to the other.

It was at the flower-show that Teenie encountered the Laird for the first time after she had heard of the calamity which loomed before him.

The flower-show was in the school-house. There were tables with rising shelves along the walls and down the centre of the room, brilliant with flowers—chiefly the old-fashioned ones ; verbenas, petunias, hollyhocks, roses, pansies, and two or three ruddy cockscombs. These, for the most part, were nurtured in cottage gardens by hard working weavers, shoemakers, and farm labourers. The gardeners of the gentlemen in the neighbourhood contributed the rare flowers which their masters' hothouses produced.

The dominie, the doctor, the exciseman, and a goodly number of the ladies and gentlemen who lived on the outskirts of the town—spinsters and widows of limited income, half-pay officers and retired tradesmen—were also amongst the exhibitors, and as eager as any of the others in the contest for the prizes. The show was a great event of the year ; it was the climax of much devoted labour and many anxious hopes. It was the cause of many heart-burnings, for the flower-growers identified themselves with their favourites and failure to win a prize—or at least special commendation—was regarded as a deep affliction ; by some accepted contentedly and wisely, with the determination to make a more strenuous effort next year, guided by the experience of this one ; by others with a spiteful grudge towards those who had succeeded ; and by others again with self-satisfied feelings of contempt for the ignorance or partiality of the judges—who were generally gardeners from distant gentlemen's seats, and nurserymen of the neighbouring towns.

For months previous to the event, the dominie was in a state of excitement, arranging the list of prizes, settling with the committee and the judges for the most convenient day for the show, and writing letters about everything to everybody. The labours of a Secretary of State were small in comparison with the dominie's, and still smaller if viewed through his notion of their relative importance to the country.

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Then he had his special anxiety about his own roses and pansies, for which he had obtained several prizes, and to which he was as much devoted as if they had been living things. At four o'clock in the morning he was in his garden, busy with his pets ; there again after school until late in the evening, sometimes even working by lamp-light. To make the show "a grand display," to win a prize, and to be complimented for his "indefatigable exertions on behalf of horticultural science," constituted to him the glory of life.

The day came, and it was exceedingly beautiful to him : the clear sunshine, with the cooling breeze from the sea ; the warm moist atmosphere of the room, gorgeous in colours—pink, red, purple, blue, green, and the innumerable shades of these—with the sweet odour of the roses. "Paradise must be a flower-show," thought the dominie, meaning anything but disrespect to Paradise.

The ladies—flowers in their way, and quite as gorgeous in attire, although not so perfect, perhaps—and the gentlemen streamed into the room ; passed slowly round, admiring, simpering, coquetting, and making comments of more or less, or no value.

"The colours are so very fine," exclaimed Mrs. Dubbieside ; "they are almost equal to the artificial !"

McGilchrist, the manufacturer, observed that if he could only obtain a dye equal to the dominie's prize pansy—a deep velvety purple—he would make a fortune by it. Others were able to admire the perfection of cultivated nature without any commercial speculations ; but a large proportion of the visitors came because it was a show where other people were to be seen, and passed round and round, blind to the beauty which was laid before them.

It was in this room Teenie met the Laird. For an instant she had a desire to avoid him ; then with a momentary frown and a sharp mental reprimand—"Why should I?"—she walked up to him and held out her hand.

The eyes of all the people near were upon them ; for there had been curious rumours going about—rumours not yet fully developed, but promising a fine crop of absurd falsehoods at no very distant date.

He was perfectly aware that they were observed ; and the

Laird, on the brink of ruin, was as grandly courteous as ever, and smiled as gaily as if he knew no care in the world.

He took her hand, greeting his daughter-in-law as respectfully, as if she had been the richest lady in the land.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, Christina. I have been hearing bad accounts of your health, and it is a charming surprise to see you here to-day with a colour on your cheeks that rivals the dominie's roses."

The compliment was disagreeable to her, for the colour was due to her anxiety as to how he would receive her; and she thought his tone drier than usual.

But the onlookers were satisfied that the Laird was most considerate, and that there was no breach between him and the minister's wife. The Laird was slyly conscious, and he determined to give the good folk still further satisfaction.

He drew Teenie's arm within his own—much to her astonishment—and walked slowly round the room with her, directing her attention to the choicest flowers, and making pleasant or patronising comments upon the growers of the plants he praised. He never paused, never hesitated for a word, or for a sentiment, because he had such sublime faith in himself that he never doubted whatever words came uppermost were worth uttering.

It did not matter to her what he said, for she was busy thinking how kind he was to forget or to forgive so readily her share in bringing about his present unfortunate position.

He was vastly admired by the onlookers, his condescension, his courtesy and flow of language were much praised; and several ladies vowed that he was the handsomest and youngest old gentleman they had ever seen. The Laird was sensible of the admiration he excited, and for the time he was really indifferent to his impending ruin.

When they had passed round the room and reached the door—where the dominie muttered his thanks for Dalmahoy's presence on that occasion, and the Laird replied with a neat compliment about the dominie's management in general and his flowers in particular—he did not leave her as she expected.

"Wattie is busy with some of his elders—arranging about the Sacrament, I dare say—so I'll walk down the road with you till we meet Drysdale with the gig," he said.

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They walked along the high road on the edge of the cliff, the sea glancing and surging below them. Her head was bent, her eyes fixed on the ground; he still retained her arm, discoursed upon the beauties of nature—the flower-show—or inquired about the baby; and she replied in monosyllables, her breast swelling with other thoughts.

Suddenly she lifted her head, and looked him straight in the face.

"You were right, Laird, and I was wrong," she said decisively.

Even he was slightly taken aback by this frank admission, for he was quick, and he had a fair idea of what she referred to.

"My dear child, I do not understand you, and you look as if the matter were serious."

"I mean about the marriage—I should not have taken him, as you said, especially when he was expecting a fortune which I knew he could never have. You were right, and you must hate me—although you try to be so kindly."

The Laird had a disagreeable remembrance of his fib, and he spoke all the more earnestly.

"It is a principle of mine, Christina, never to cry over spilled milk. I would have been glad if you had followed my advice when I offered it to you; but you and Wattie have thought otherwise and acted otherwise; there is no more to be said. We must make the best we can of matters as they stand."

"But I have not got the education to fit me for his wife—you know it—you knew—why didn't you hold him back?"

In his surprise at this attack, the Laird found himself trying to reconcile her to her position.

"You can still learn, my dear child. Education develops, it does not create. It seems to me clearer daily, that we are what we are by the force of nature, and not by education. Education refines, modifies, improves natural faculties, and renders us more or less useful, or more or less harmful to society. That is all. Education will never shorten the ears of a donkey."

"And it will never shorten mine."

"I did not mean that, Christina," he said hastily, shocked by the construction she had placed on his words.

"I know. What are you to do about this money you require?"

Dalmahoy was surprised to find himself put out of countenance by this child. Clearing his throat, and not quite so calmly as usual—

"Walter has told you then?"

"Everything."

"Well, we are going to my sister—there is Wattie coming for me—and I expect her to remove the difficulty."

"And she will not do it—I know, from what she said to me."

This was spoken with a dogged conviction which startled him.

"I hope you are mistaken, Christina," he said very sincerely; "if not, you will soon see the auctioneer at Dalmahoy, and me a beggar."

"And it is my fault," she muttered bitterly, as Drysdale came up with the gig.

Teenie walked home. The Laird and his son entered the gig, and drove over to Craighburn.

They were received by Grace, who looked somewhat uncomfortable: the cause—she had not been able to learn what her mother intended to do; but she smiled all the same, and gave her friends a hearty welcome.

Dame Wishart was in her chair, looking much brisker than usual, and evidently prepared for visitors. She had on a new cap of somewhat gaudy colours; she wore a brocaded gown which had belonged to her mother, and which was never used except on state occasions; it was a piece of family grandeur, and had passed through several generations. Her face was keener and her eyes brighter than they had been for a long time. She seemed, indeed, to be nerved up to some great effort.

Both Dalmahoy and Walter expressed the pleasure they really felt in seeing her look so well; but the former experienced an uncomfortable doubt that all these preparations indicated the fulfilment of Teenie's prophecy.

Grace stood behind her mother's chair, ready to supply any of her wants. She looked with a curiously anxious gaze from her mother to the two men seated before her.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

WANT OF MONEY.

DAME Wishart sharply interrupted the Laird's common-places about her looks and the weather.

"It's siller you want, Hugh. What's the sum?"

"You are abrupt enough, sister, to make one go away without saying a word about it."

"You may, if you like."

But the Laird did not like, especially as he could not help himself otherwise.

"I wish to explain to you——"

"What's the sum?" she interrupted.

"If you would only listen one moment, you would understand the whole position."

"What's the sum?" she repeated.

"I would tell you if you would allow me to explain——"

"What's the sum, and no fraising about it?"

"Very well, since you will have it that way," said the Laird, feeling himself altogether at a disadvantage, and not relishing the position, more particularly when it was his sister who spoke to him; "the sum is seven thousand, with a few hundreds for interest."

"You can renew if you like."

"No."

"What for?"

"Because the bond has fallen into the hands of a dissolute rascal, who wants the money."

The Laird was sometimes very severe upon spendthrifts, and could preach beautifully upon the subject.

"You can borrow elsewhere."

"Not without paying a Jew's interest, that would bring me to the same pass as the present and worse, in a twelvemonth."

"So you came to me as your only chance?"

"Yes."

"Seven—say eight thousand. It's a heap of siller," she said meditatively.

"Yes, but the property is worth twice that," observed Dal-mahoy, beginning to feel himself again; "and if I can only find minerals, as I am almost sure of doing on Brunton's farm, why, there is no saying what wealth there is in store for us."

"Aye," she replied drily, "but you've been seeking the minerals a long while, and you have not found them. You want eight thousand. Very well."

There was a long pause, during which the Laird eyed his sister eagerly, and she sat staring at her lap, nervously moving her fingers, and apparently considering the proposal. She put out her hand, drawing Grace towards her; then, with a curious twinkle in her faded eyes, she thrust her daughter towards Walter.

"There," she said, with a kind of vicious pleasure, "marry them, and you shall ha'e three times what you need."

"Oh, mother!" cried Grace, bursting into tears.

Walter rose, pale and agitated, taking Grace's hand tenderly in his own.

"Hush, Grace; she forgets."

The Laird became white, then red with chagrin. He got up, and with much dignity put back his chair as if in preparation to leave.

"I am sorry your mind is so weak, sister" (he knew that he was hitting her on the most sensitive part), "that you forget Wattie is already married. However, I see that you are resolved not to help me over this ditch, and so there is no more to be said."

"You're wrong, Hugh," answered the dame, in a dry hard voice. "Stupid as I am whiles, I have not forgotten that you have broken our paction, and that Wattie has wedded a useless thing from Rowanden—a fisherman's lass! I have not forgotten that you, between you, have made my daughter miserable! Make her happy as she was, and all that I have is yours; but you have broken her heart, and you come to me for help. Fie on you, Hugh!—and fie on you, Wattie! You should have begged your bread rather than come here for the siller you would not take when it was offered to you, with the life of the best lass that ever drew breath. No, man; no, I do not forget. I mind well."

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"Mother, mother, mother!" cried Grace in bitter shame, dropping on her knees and hiding her face on the dame's lap.

With a frightened look the mother bent over her child, and she seemed to become slowly conscious that in upbraiding her brother and Walter she was most cruelly wounding Grace. The furrows on her face were drawn closer, and deepened with pain, as her bony hands plied nervously with Grace's hair, the while her eyes seemed to darken with fury.

"Whisht you, my lamb," she muttered in a quavering voice; "I did not mean to hurt you. Whisht you, now. I have forgotten you too often, and I did it again to-day. But I'm growing old, Gracie, and I dare say it's just as well, or better, that you are not taken from me, for I could not live long without you. I ken what you are, and that's what makes me wroth wi' these fools, that could pass you by, though it's the better for me—it's the better for me. Whisht you, now, and I'll not say another word—the stupid gomerils, that could shut their e'en to such a jewel. Ah! they have little notion of what they have lost, but I ken, I ken—the idiots they are—but whisht you, my bonnie lamb; you'll soon forget."

Alternately trying to coax her daughter into resignation, and uttering angry reproaches against her brother and Walter, the old lady seemed to forget the presence of the gentlemen.

To them the position was humiliating in the extreme. The Laird was indignant, yet conscious of having behaved ill, and assumed a coolness which he did not feel. Walter heartily sympathised with his aunt, and with her half doctored expressions of love for her daughter, notwithstanding the harshness with which she judged his conduct.

"Will you let me speak to your mother alone, Grace?" he said, stooping down and placing his arm round her to assist her to rise.

How the touch thrilled her! She got up immediately, and except that her eyes were red, and the face pale, there was no sign of the recent outburst of grief. She was calm and thoughtful as usual, and quietly set about arranging the cushion at her mother's back.

"You can say what you wish to say before me, Walter," she said softly, "and my mother will understand you the more readily when I am beside her."

Walter hesitated, for he was going to speak about Teenie; but he had such faith in whatever Grace advised that he obeyed.

The Laird stood swinging his glasses, looking as if he had no greater interest than that of simple curiosity in the proceedings.

Dame Wishart's face had become dull; her thoughts were wandering away to other days, and to hopes indirectly associated with the present circumstances; but she seemed already to have forgotten the scene which had just taken place.

She sat staring at the place where her daughter had knelt, and muttering to herself words which were unintelligible to the listeners.

Walter laid his hand gently on hers.

"I wish to speak to you, aunt. Will you listen?"

"What is it about—not the siller?"

"No, we do not wish to ask you for that now. What I have to say is about Grace and myself."

Her face cleared again, and her wandering faculties seemed to be concentrated upon her nephew's words.

"Say away."

"I want you, aunt, to understand that my father is in no way to blame for the breach of the engagement you and he made for Grace and myself. The fault is entirely mine——"

"And mine, mother," interrupted Grace. "I refused to have him when I knew that he thought better of Teenie Thorston."

"But I might have held my tongue, Grace," he said sadly.

"And I would have found out the truth when it was too late to mend matters," she replied firmly. "No, Walter, it is best as it is, if my poor mother could only see it as we do."

"Choot!" cried the dame angrily, "I see it better than you do. You don't think I'm blind or doited, do you? I tell you, Wattie, you ought to have spoken to me as well as to Grace. But now that you've had your fling, see if you can pay the piper. I will not."

It would have been useless to have attempted to explain to her that she was, or seemed to be, incapable of understanding anything at the time when Walter spoke to Grace.

"I only wish you to relieve my father of any blame," said Walter earnestly. "Blame me for it all, and try to think kindly of my wife."

"I'll not think of her at all. I dare say she's good enough for you—but you shall not have the siller."

She reiterated that resolution as if she found a pleasure in the mere sound.

"At least you will understand, aunt, that in what I have done I was trying to do what I believed to be right, and therefore best."

"I understand nothing but that you have broken the bargain made between your father and me, and that you have made her unhappy—though she's a fool for her pains."

Grace now quite calm, touched her mother's arm hastily and, with something like a flush of pride—

"I tell you, mother, Walter acted as I wished him, and you vex me and pain him when you say that he has made me unhappy."

Dame Wishart turned sharply upon her daughter.

"Do you think you can cheat me? Have I not seen how poorly you were, though you would not say it? Have I not seen you in the weary nights when you thought I was sleeping?—but I'm not aye sleeping when my eyes are shut. Have I not seen you greeting to yourself, glowering at nothing, and trying to make believe that you were reading the paper or a book? I've seen it all; I know how wae and weary is your heart, and it's his fault.—Look at her, Wattie, look at the bonnie white face, and the colour that's on it enow because I'm telling truth. Look at her—has your wife such a face as that?—she cannot have such a heart. You have cast all that away; but look at her and you'll ken why I am bitter against you, and bitter against your father, and why you shall not have the siller."

"Will nothing make you spare me, mother, if you will not spare them?" cried Grace again, confused, pained, and vexed.

"Choots! you're but a bairn."

To Walter, his aunt's words afforded a bitter revelation. He seemed to awaken as from a pleasant sleep to the full knowledge that he was guilty of a terrible crime. It was only at this moment that he really understood the sacrifice Grace had made for him. Blinded by his own selfish love for Teenie, and with a stupidity partly due to his want of that vanity which induces some men to fancy every woman who speaks kindly is

in love with them, he had accepted literally her declaration that she would be content in seeing him married to the woman he loved. Still blind and stupid, he had regarded her friendship for Teenie, the frank and devoted services she rendered her, as guarantees that she was satisfied, and that whatever disappointment she might have felt at first had been completely forgotten. Now he learned that she was still suffering, and he could partly imagine what she must have suffered on his account.

All his senses were quickened by the pain of this discovery ; he remembered so many things he had done and said which must have been torture to her—he looked back upon so many trifles which must have wounded her acutely—that he marvelled at her submission and at her generous concealment of it all, whilst, for himself, he could not have felt more humble or more afflicted had he been found guilty of murder. And it was a kind of murder that he had perpetrated—he had murdered her youth and doomed her to long years of sorrow.

If he had only awakened sooner ! But the wrong was done and could never be requited.

He could not speak ; he only gazed at her with such sad, regretful eyes, that Grace could not bear to meet them. She would have given worlds if she could have foreseen what her mother had intended to say, at this meeting, so that she might have prevented Walter from being present.

The awkward pause was broken by the Laird, who, without the least evidence of vexation or disappointment in his manner, advanced to his sister.

" Good-bye—come over to Dalmahoy if you can some time between this and the next three or four months, for about the end of that period the sale will probably take place, and I shall no longer be able to offer you hospitality there. May I make a suggestion ? I would advise you to tell your man of business to buy the property for you ; it is worth all that is likely to be offered for it, and in that way you might still keep it in the family, as it were."

" And let you sit rent-free," said the dame drily.

The Laird made a deprecatory movement with his glasses.

" Upon my word you are too suspicious ; I give you a useful hint, and you instantly charge me with doing so for my own

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profit. Well, perhaps it is natural for you who have money to suspect one who has none—especially when that one is your brother. Will you allow me to come and dine with you occasionally, when I can find no other table than yours? I shall keep out of the way of your friends, if possible; and I shall try not to borrow half-crowns. You will find me the most discreet of poor relations—indeed I would go into the poor's house at once, but that my being there might be somewhat discreditable to you."

"You know whose fault it is," she muttered, gazing at him vaguely as if her mind were wandering in search of his meaning.

"Undoubtedly, no one has a better right to know than I have," he went on; but he was not so successful this time in concealing the bitterness he felt, under his assumed air of jaunty sarcasm. "Some men in my position would endeavour to excuse themselves—I don't. Some men would blame their luck—I don't. Some men would be disposed to blame you, sister, for refusing me this temporary assistance which would save the property—but I don't. You are quite right, there is no excuse for poverty—unless it may be the ability to endure it with fortitude. I shall endeavour to display that commendable talent."

"It'll be the first talent you ever displayed, Hugh."

The Laird put on his glasses and looked at her.

"You are remarkably well to-day, Sarah. I congratulate you; may your present health continue long. Good-bye."

As he pressed her hand, there was a painful twitching of the dame's features, as if some relenting thoughts were passing through her mind which she could not or would not utter.

The Laird paid no heed: he took his leave in the same friendly manner as if the interview had not determined the ruin of Dalmahoy.

Walter bending over her and pressing her hand, whispered—"Try to forgive me, aunt; I did not know the harm I was doing."

Full of pain, and full of regret for the trouble he had brought upon Grace, upon the dame, and upon his father, he was loyal in every thought to his wife. The position was extremely awkward. To have saved his father's property he would not have

married Grace, for in his eyes that would have been the blackest injustice ; but to have spared her pain he would have fulfilled the engagement from which she had released him, and he would have tried to forget Teenie. As matters stood now he could only regret his blindness, and hope that Grace felt less than her mother imagined.



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CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN THE GLOAMING.

GRACE followed the Laird down-stairs. She saw how the placid face became rapidly scored with wrinkles; how the jaws fell, the head and shoulders stooped as if under a heavy burthen.

"Uncle, you must have some wine before you go," she said, drawing him into the parlour.

"Dear me! you're there, Grace," he exclaimed, instantly straightening his back and trying to assume the customary expression of calm self-complacency. But he saw her pitying look, he knew that she had observed him, and head and shoulders drooped again as he said faintly, "Yes, child, I'll take some wine—I require something to stimulate me just now, for I feel ridiculously weak."

He took a glass of sherry and drank it hastily, which was quite unusual with the Laird, who liked to sip and relish every drop of his wine. He filled the glass again, and was more patient with it; but his nerves were evidently much shaken.

"You'll not think too hardly of my mother, uncle," she pleaded softly; "she is in a strange mood to-day; but she will do what you want by-and by."

The Laird shook his head and tried to smile, but failed.

"I shall not think hardly of her, my child, because she is doing just what I would have done myself, and I think she is quite right. Wattie is a fool, and I am no better to have yielded to him; but ——"

He took some more wine instead of finishing the sentence; he was thinking of the blunder those confounded lawyers had caused him to make about the Methven estate.

"She will give you the money before you require it," repeated Grace.

"There is not the least likelihood of that; she is in one of the stubborn moods for which our family is famous, and once 'No'

is said, 'No' it remains, however much we may become convinced that it ought to be 'Yes.' But I would not care for myself, or for the boys—they can manage—but what is to become of the girls, Heaven knows. They are helpless creatures, and can neither toil nor spin—maybe on that account, like the lilies of the field, they will have the fine raiment which is their chief concern; but the lilies have a certain beauty which recommends them to the eyes of men, and I can't say as much for my daughters."

With that wicked joke he finished his wine and walked out to the hall. There Walter was waiting, and there Pate instantly joined his mistress, rubbing his nose against her dress and seeking the recognition which was at present denied him.

The servant was holding the door open, the groom was holding the horse, and so Walter had no opportunity to speak to Grace, of which she was very glad.

"Will you drive down to the gate, sir, and I will join you there," said Walter, as his father stepped into the gig.

Dalmahoy drove slowly down the avenue. Walter took Grace's shrinking hand; without a word spoken she knew what he meant, and, although her heart trembled at the idea of speaking to him alone just after the trial up-stairs, she felt afraid of doing anything that might appear strange in the eyes of the servant Mary, who was still holding the door open. She could not explain to him there: his pale face and sad eyes pleaded, and because Mary was looking on, she yielded.

But she yielded hurriedly, as if she were anxious to get breath, and without hat or shawl she walked out with him. Mary was a dull lass; but she knew something of the relation in which the cousins had formerly stood to each other, and she could not help observing the flurried manner of her mistress.

There was a footpath leading down to the gate through the narrow belt of wood on one side of the avenue, from which it was entirely screened by a high trim hedge; a soft moss-grown path, in which there was a perpetual twilight, cool even when the sun was hottest. Now in the gloaming, when the trees were tipped with the golden radiance of the western sky, and the windows of the house were aflame, the path lay in deep shadow, crossed at intervals by bars of silver light.

They proceeded down this path. Grace had withdrawn her

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hand ; but she walked close beside him, her eyes searching the ground as if seeking there some explanation of the nervous, uneasy feeling which possessed her. She attributed it to the exposure her mother had made of the secret which she had guarded so well, as she thought, and most anxiously from him.

His face wore the blank expression of one who has heard some terrible news and has not yet had time to realize it. They walked on silently and slowly, she now and then glancing sideways at him, wondering what he wanted to say, half divining and wholly wishing that she could have escaped from him without adding to the pain which her mother had caused.

The Laird walked the horse through the gateway, and drew up. His head was bowed again, and he sat for several minutes, unconscious that there was somebody standing by the step of the gig, softly calling to him. A touch on the knee roused him.

"Bless my soul, Christina ! how did you come here ? You startled me from profound cogitations," he exclaimed, head and shoulders erect instantly. "Why didn't you come with us ?"

"I did not mean to come," she answered in short awkward sentences. "I was going home ; but I was anxious—about the money. What does she say ?"

Without replying, he looked at her searchingly.

"What's the matter with you ?—you're like a ghost."

And in the grey gloaming, in her light dress, and with the bonnie face so white and anxious, the Laird was quite justified in the comparison he made.

"What does she say ?" repeated Teenie stubbornly.

"Oh, just an old woman's say—a little spiteful, and a little wrong-headed ; nothing more. Are you going up to the house ? or will you jump in, and Walter can either walk back or get up behind ?"

He was not disposed to answer her question just then ; indeed, he was anxious to cheat himself into the belief that Dame Wishart would change her mind. Teenie understood him.

"Where is Walter ?" was all she said.

"You'll meet him coming down the avenue."

She passed in at the gate. The Laird gazed after her, then drew breath, relieved. He was glad to be alone.

She strained her eyes through the shadows of the trees to

catch the first glimpse of her husband. It never occurred to her to question why he had remained behind. There was a bend in the road ; she would see him as soon as she reached that. She went on, now hurriedly, and again with heavy steps and hesitating. She did not wish to go up to the house ; and yet she was half inclined to go, for she wished to see Grace. Dalmahoy was not inclined to tell her the result of the interview ; she knew what it would be, but she wanted confirmation, and to know why the boon was refused. Walter might refuse to tell all in his desire to spare her, and she could not insist if she saw that it vexed him. She could cross-examine Grace, who was the spirit of truth, and would confess everything. But Teenie had a shrinking dislike to go to the house, remembering how bitterly the dame had spoken on her last visit.

She reached the bend—still no sign of him. Presently she heard voices, low and earnest : Grace and Walter : they were on the other side of the hedge.

Teenie called, but was not heard. She looked for some gap through which to reach them. There was none ; the hedge, close, thick, and high, presented an impregnable barrier, right and left, as far as the eye could reach in that dim, melancholy light.

The voices were farther down towards the gate. She followed, and called again—still unheard. Then words—fragments of sentences—struck her ears, and chilled her. She could not hear all—only scraps now and then, and she was left to fill up the blanks for herself.

She walked on side by side with the speakers, hands clutching at her cloak, lips tightly closed, and making no further effort to let them know she was there.

The cooing of the stock-dove, the loud song of many birds, the chatter of rooks, the distant sound of voices—"Gee-up," "Wo-ben ;" a shepherd's whistle or shout to his dog, and a faint rumble of wheels ; these were the sounds which filled the air.

Walter turned to his companion with that sad earnest face which he had shown often of late ; but he was trying to smile at present.

"Now that we are here, Grace, and alone, I scarcely know how to speak to you ; for it seems like impertinence on my

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part to accept literally all that your mother said ; and yet there was something in it which made me fear—no ; it made me *feel* that I had done a great wrong to one I love. Yes—love is the word, for I do love you, Grace ; and in saying it, I am neither in word nor heart disloyal to Teenie. She knows it, and she loves you too. But I wish—aye, very fervently wish—that I could believe your mother might have been deceived as to your thoughts about me.”

How the poor girl's heart shook, and her limbs threatened to fail her ! But she understood her ground now, and she took his arm with the frank confidence of a sister.

“Thank you, Walter ; I should be sorry if you doubted that my regard for you was less than yours for me. I am unchanged ; but you must remember what an invalid my dear mother is. She had one fixed idea—the union of Craighburn and Dalmahoy. It has clung to her through all her wandering fancies, and she cannot understand how it should be possible that—that —”

She stammered ; and he, with much bitter self-reproach, filled up the pause.

“That I should be so cruel to you, and so base—so miserably selfish as to accept from you the sacrifice of an arrangement which was dear to you on her account, if not on your own.”

(“I am unchanged,” Teenie heard, and understood better than her husband ; then from him, “So cruel to you . . . so base.” These words bewildered and then angered her.)

Grace pressed his arm, and looked up at him with a forced gaiety.

“Come, sir, you must not be too vain ; you must recollect that you are a minister, and married.”

“It is because I recollect both that I feel so wretched.”

(Teenie heard that, and misconstrued it.)

Grace trembled again with vague terrors ; she thought of Teenie, and felt that there was something very guilty in this interchange of sentiment, although both were perfectly honest in thought and word. She determined it should be the last interview of the kind they should have. But the old intense passion for this man held her firmly, and she could not run away from him, as she felt ought to be her immediate action.

“You frighten me when you speak that way.—Let us part now. Good-bye.”

She looked at his face ; it was cold and hard, with the expression of a man who, conscious of guilt, is resolved to meet the inevitable consequences.

"Not yet," he said hurriedly ; "you are not to go yet. I want to try to understand our position ; I want you to forgive me."

"For what ?"—as if she did not understand !

He turned his eyes full upon her, and she shrank under their gaze. The position was to him so serious, that even the most kindly attempt to gloss it over, or escape it, was disagreeable.

"I wish to see the worst, Grace," he said quietly, and as if she had not spoken ; "will you help me ?"

She turned away her head. How could she help him to see what she had striven so hard to conceal ?

"If I can," she said with quivering lips.

"Tell me then"—he was trying to speak calmly—"if we had it all to do over again, with the knowledge we now possess, would you have me act in the same way as I have done ?"

"Yes." She found the word difficult to utter, but she did utter it, steadfastly.

"You do not blame me, then ?"

"No."

She could say that firmly, and without difficulty ; she loved him too much to blame him.

"God bless you, Grace, for that assurance ; although I know it is your brave, good heart that speaks, and not your reason. I blame myself so much, that it is a relief to feel that you wish to believe me innocent. I did try to do what was best ; I felt bound to go to you when I understood my own feelings, and to tell you ; I was ready and willing at the least word from you to try to forget Teenie. You would not speak that word. I was selfish, and forgot that you were too generous to speak it—forgot that, in a lower nature than yours, mere pride would have prevented it being spoken. I was blind ; I see now, and know that I should have been silent to spare you pain."

"And then Teenie would have suffered. You did right to speak ; your silence would have been the cruellest wrong to me. Trust me, Walter, I shall be quite happy when I see you so."

He pressed her hand gratefully as he answered—

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"Good, generous, brave as ever! But my happiness now, Grace, depends on yours."

(Teenie's hand sprung up to her breast, as if she felt a sudden pang there. She wished they were at the gate; hurried forward a few steps, then paused, and again kept pace with the others.)

She could look at him steadily now; she could even smile frankly at his morbid sensitiveness, so loving was she.

"You must not praise me too much, Walter, or I shall think you are making fun of me. Now let us look at the position practically. An arrangement was made for us—neither you nor I had a say in it, although we were willing to implement it, as the lawyers say. Well, you discovered that one desirable element of the bargain was wanting, and you sensibly told me—you were bound to tell me—and that made it better for both of us. We broke up the agreement. Suppose a man sold me a horse as sound in wind and limb; upon going to the stable he found the horse had been down meanwhile, and spoiled its knees. Would you call him an honest man if he did not tell me of the misfortune? and wouldn't you think I was quite justified in saying I didn't want a horse with broken knees? It's the same case exactly, I won't have a husband with broken knees any more than a horse."

"If you are satisfied, that is all I care to know," he answered, smiling.

"Very well, then; we'll make another bargain, this time for ourselves: we shall never return to this subject, and we shall say nothing about our gossip to Teenie—it would only annoy her to no purpose."

"I will do whatever you wish, Grace."

He unlatched the little gate which opened to the avenue; she passed through, he followed, and both were somewhat startled to find themselves face to face with Teenie.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONQUERED.

HERE was a nervous timidity in Teenie's manner, as if she would have liked to escape them. But that passed immediately, and although there was a slight degree of reserve in her expression, it was attributable to the confusion and pain which she was trying to hide.

The three figures stood in the deepening gloaming, the trees casting mysterious shadows on their faces. Walter, with one hand resting on the gate, his eyes fixed on Teenie; Grace, holding up her skirt with one hand, the fingers of the other twirling a sprig of hawthorn; Teenie, looking downward, fingers playing with the buttons of her cloak, like a child who had been detected stealing jam.

The pause was only for an instant, but the three were conscious of it, and felt that somehow it made a difference amongst them.

With the impetuosity of the child seeking to defend herself she spoke.

"I could not wait till Walter came home—the Laird told me I would meet him in the avenue—I heard you speaking—I called, but you did not hear me—and so I just followed the sound till we came here."

"We were both deaf, Teenie, for we were trying to bury some old vexations, and to get the better of some new ones," said Grace, smiling frankly.

"And you have walked all the way—Teenie, Teenie, you will be laying yourself up again," exclaimed Walter, earnest, fond, unconscious of any doubt which might have been inspired by what she had heard—the best proof of his sincerity—and placing his arm round her as if to support her.

"Come away up to the house and rest a little," said Grace; "you must not go back without having tea, and we can have a nice chat. Then I'll drive you home."

"No, thank you, Grace; the Laird is there—I would rather go back with him. Will you come over to-morrow? I want to speak to you."

It was a very sweet pleading face that she raised, so unlike the bright brave visage of the girl that Grace was rendered uneasy by it.

"Certainly, Teenie, as soon as I can get away I shall be with you."

"Good-bye then; don't forget—I can't speak just now."

Teenie kissed her, which was such an unusual action on her part that Grace was more and more amazed, and began to experience vague feelings of alarm. There was such pleading tenderness in Teenie's manner, so much like that of an affectionate nature suddenly roused to a sense of guilt, and eager to make reparation for the offence, that Grace wondered and was silent.

Teenie hurried out to the gig, hiding her face. The Laird was roused from a reverie, straightened himself, descended and offered his assistance to his daughter-in-law. But she sprang into her place before he was well on the ground.

"Upon my honour, Teenie, I think you could dance on the tight-rope," exclaimed the Laird, following her with much less agility than he generally displayed.

Walter, after seeing that the apron was hooked, and that his wife was properly wrapped up, took his place behind. Grace was standing at the gate. Good-bye, and they were off, she watching them till they crossed the burn, and then, in much perplexity of mind, walking slowly back to the house.

Teenie, with head bowed, as if to shield her face from the wind—which was keen, in spite of the heat of the day—sat in a dull, weary mood. Her eyes felt hot and aching, as if she had been sitting up all night, or as if she had been crying for several hours. They were dry and parched. She could not concentrate her mind upon anything; her thoughts were quite disconnected, jumping from the free childish times to the day on which Ailie had brought home the book of fate, and Walter had told her his story—she wished he had not told her the story; she would have been happier—then away to the far northern seas, to the whales, and her father; back again to the Laird, and the now inevitable ruin of Dalmahoy. She could not see anything before or around her, and the uncertain shades

of the gloaming were already black as night to her eyes. Walter spoke to her several times, but she did not hear.

The Laird made one or two courteous attempts to entertain her, but finding that she was quite indifferent, he, for once in his life, cheerfully subsided into silence.

They formed a dull party; the horse, a fine high-stepping chestnut, was the only one that displayed life and action, and at a good trot he carried his sad companions rapidly over the ground.

A junction of two roads, the one leading to Dalmahoy, the other towards Rowanden and Drumliemount.

"You'll come up and have dinner with us," said the Laird, and drove on without waiting for an answer.

Teenie was anxious to get home for Baby's sake, but she did not like to oppose the Laird in his least wish at present, and so she yielded without a word.

Drysdale's face was longer than ever as he received his master and guests at the door. Dinner had been kept waiting more than an hour, and that was enough to disturb the best-intentioned butler.

"Everything will be fusionless as a burnt haddock without sauce," he grumbled, as if it were an entirely personal affliction.

"In a quarter of an hour," said Dalmahoy, and passed upstairs.

"It's just like him," muttered Drysdale, still more afflicted, "he has nae consideration for the soup or the fish either."

The Laird was thinking of a time, near at hand, when he would have neither soup nor fish.

"How is your new tenant of the fishing?" said Walter, hanging up his hat.

"Oh he's well enough—but is he as rich as they say, Master Walter?"

"I believe so—hundreds of thousands a year from some business in London."

"Poor fellow, and wi' a' his wealth he canna land a salmon-trout! I saw him with a fine one yesterday, and he ruggit at it as though he wanted to get the hook out of its mouth, instead of landing the fish. And he did that, he got the hook out, and the fish gaed awa', flippin' its tail, and just laughing at him. Poor fellow, wi' a' his wealth!"

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Feeling intense pity for the unfortunate merchant—and some contempt too—Drysdale went off to see about the dinner.

When he appeared in the drawing-room the Laird was quite spruce, and as gay as the most youthful gallant. He took Teenie down to dinner; Walter, his eldest sister; Alice going alone, but making believe that she was leaning on the arm of the most entertaining cavalier, conversing in confidential tones with herself, playfully covering her mouth with a pretty lace handkerchief, as if she were concealing her laughter at wonderful witticisms, and occasionally glancing back at her sister, as who should say, "Don't you envy me?"

Dalmahoy had never been so brilliant as on this evening. He told his old stories with new relish, until even Drysdale grinned behind a dish-cover, although he was well seasoned to all his master's jokes, and had the least natural inclination to laughter of any man. He discoursed upon life in general, and the greatest happiness of the greatest number in particular, as if he had nothing to think about but the furtherance of that principle. He was perfectly in earnest, for when a man plays much with a sentiment there always comes to be an element of truth in it to him—the result of habit, if not of conviction.

Miss Burnett and Alice were astounded by the sprightliness of their father, although they were still ignorant of the impending calamity; Walter who knew how affairs stood, was puzzled; and Teenie wondered how he could be so merry with such sorrow sitting on his hearth.

The ladies retired; the Laird forestalled his son, and bowed them out with an old-fashioned courtesy, and a pretty compliment for each as she passed.

He returned to his place, thrust aside the stiff backed chair upon which he had been sitting, and drew an easy one up to the table, like a man that makes up his mind for thorough indulgence.

"Push about the jorum, Wattie; that's the claret, fine stuff; we have a few dozen left; pity I can't make you a present of it; but mind you scrape every farthing together and buy it at the sale. I'll never forgive you if you let it pass; and when you've got it, I'll help you to drink it."

The wine stuck in Walter's throat; he could drink no more. "The more fool you," exclaimed Dalmahoy, sipping from his

glass with exquisite relish ; "you'll not have the same chance often. 'Pon my soul, the prospect of the sale adds fifty per cent to my enjoyment of the wine. Here's luck to the buyers."

"Have you really made up your mind to part with everything ?"

The Laird crossed his hands, twirled his thumbs and with an air of resignation—

"I am spared that trouble ; you and your aunt have arranged it between you. So there is no more to be said, and there is nothing left but to take the utmost enjoyment out of everything while I can still, in a manner, call it mine.

Walter moved uncomfortably on his chair.

"Be quiet ; drink and enjoy yourself, or ring for coffee, and go up-stairs. I insist upon not being disturbed ; and I shall take my nap here this evening."

Walter did ring for coffee, drank his with nervous haste, and went up-stairs.

The Laird left his cup standing beside him until it grew cold, and continued to sip his claret. But when his son had left him, the expression of indifference slowly passed from his face, and was replaced by one of dull despondency. He gazed at the comforts which surrounded him ; he was to leave all these. He was to walk out of the home of his fathers, which was dearer to him than he had ever fancied until now. The sentiment of association or reverence for the past was strong upon him, and he felt that it would be a hard thing to part from all these old friends—even the chairs and tables were old friends in his present mood. He felt very old—very much broken down, and inclined to bitter thoughts about his sister and his son.

He forgot his wine, although his fingers encircled the glass ; he forgot his nap, and the announcement he had made that he was to take it there (it was his custom to have his nap in the drawing-room whilst one of his daughters read the *Times* to him, then to waken up and read for himself when they had gone to bed) ; he forgot that Drysdale would be fretting about not being permitted to clear the table, and his head dropped forward, his eyes fixed stolidly on the claret jug.

A hand touched him on the shoulder and he looked up heavily ; but instantly he made an effort to resume his jaunty air, and to rise, when he saw it was Teenie who had roused him.

But her hand was like that of a strong man—or he was very weak—and she would not allow him to rise.

"I stole away from them up-stairs, and came down to you," she said in a half-stifled voice; "I knew you would be thinking and—oh, Laird, my heart is breaking, for it's all my fault!"

She swung round, dropping on her knees before him, her bonnie face covered with her hands.

"My dear child, you talk—you talk nonsense," he stammered, patting her head and smoothing the rich yellow hair, which made him think of the gold he could not obtain.

She looked up, her eyes bright with tears, and the pallor of her face reproaching him for his feeble attempt to deceive her.

"You will have to let the place be sold?"

"I am afraid so."

There was something disagreeable sticking in his throat, which rendered his voice husky.

"You will have to go away from this—your home—your father's home. Where will you go to? what will you do?"

His flimsy disguise, although pretty well maintained up to this point; fell from him, and he broke down.

"God knows," he sobbed, hiding his face, ashamed of his misery. "The girls have no wit, and their hands have never been trained to anything; I am an old man, even more helpless than they are."

She was maddened by the sight of his grief; her arms were round his neck, her head resting on his shoulder, and she too was sobbing.

"Will you ever be able to forgive me?"

He embraced her affectionately.

"I do now, my child, heartily," he said with a sincerity which could not be misunderstood; "I was inclined to blame you, Teenie, for if you had not been in the way—well, there, we'll say no more about that. But you have taught me to love you just when I might have disliked you most. God bless you, my child; it has done me good to get this out, and we'll manage to make all right somehow, so don't you fret. You are a comfort and a blessing to me."

She was very grateful for these tender words; she had never felt affection for the Laird until now—misfortune had drawn them so close together.

Her eyes sparkled through tears with a brilliant idea, and she almost gasped in her haste to utter it.

"My father has money in the bank; can I not go and get that? Then it would be easier for you to make up the difference, and I would be so proud to think that we had been able to help you—it would make me very happy."

He patted her head kindly, and was really sorry to disappoint her generous ambition.

"That cannot be, Teenie"—it was the first time he had addressed her by that pet name, and, except in company, he never afterwards used the formal Christina—"It cannot be unless you have a cheque signed by your father."

He did not say, as he thought, that it would be difficult for him to accept the rescue of Dalmahoy at the hands of Skipper Dan. A curious contradiction, for he would have accepted anything, and would have even expected a great deal, if Teenie had been Methven's heiress.

"But I can go to the bank and tell them that it is my father's money, and that he would do it if he was here. Mr. Shaw will believe me."

"No doubt he would; but he dare not give you the money without your father's signature."

"Is there nothing we can do?"

"Nothing that I can see at present."

"Will not General Forbes help you?"

"No."

"Aunt Jane?"

"She cannot and wouldn't if she could. There is no help to be looked for from our relations—as usual. They have all got some absurd notion that I have interfered with their chance of sharing that confounded Methven estate amongst them."

Teenie smarted under the reference to the Methven property, for it recalled a disagreeable idea which the Laird himself had planted in her mind.

"Oh, if my father would only come back in time!"

"Perhaps he will," said Dalmahoy, to comfort her, rather than with any hope that the skipper would be able to relieve him if he did come back before the sale. "But there now, don't let us speak any more about it. You are spoiling my digestion; let me attend to it whilst I have something to digest."

She wondered how he could speak so lightly under the circumstances.

Another bright idea occurred to her. Grace was coming to Drumliemount to-morrow; something might be arranged between them. She said nothing of that, however, and she felt that it was a very bitter extremity indeed which could compel her to make an appeal to Grace for help of this kind. It was a forlorn hope and she clung to it desperately.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ON THE SEA.

THEY walked together down the winding road—Grace and Teenie, going for a row. Firs, bracken, and the bonnie bright red rowans glancing by them on the road-side ; behind, the soft headline of the hills, drawing near them over the cold bleak moorland ; before them, the sea and rugged coast, high cliffs, on the edge of which the road had been cut, jagged lumps of rock forming a wall along one side to prevent travellers from tumbling into the abyss beneath—and these jagged, irregular boulders seemed to the eye of fancy like men and children holding hands to guard the wayfarer from harm.

On the sharp brown promontory of the Witch's Bay, a group of white sea-gulls, whose eerie cry suggested storm and disaster. One flapped his wings, and set off seaward on a voyage of discovery ; and presently the others followed in a body, swooping above the rocks for a minute, and then dropping into the water, all keeping near shore in obedience to the mysterious instinct which warned them of an approaching tempest.

Teenie reached the boat, and looked back for Grace, who was making her way down the steep path, preceded by her collie, Pate. The latter gambolled merrily on the yellow sand, and brought an offering of seaweed to his mistress, which he laid at her feet with a grin of triumph on his good-natured, ugly face. But he showed a decided dislike to approach too near the water ; and when he saw his mistress advance quietly to where Teenie stood, the water rushing up and laving her feet, he came to a dead halt, and stared with a comical puzzled look, as if the proceedings were altogether beyond his comprehension.

"Will you get in ?" said Teenie. "If you sit at the stern, I can easily push the boat off.

"Are you not to wait for Walter ?"

"No, we can come in for him when we see him. Two of

the elders have got hold of him, and there's no saying when they may let him go. I'll help you."

She held out her hand as if she had been a man offering assistance to a lady. Grace hesitated, and looked at Pate, who remained at some yards distance, his paws planted before him as if to save himself from tumbling over a precipice.

"Are you afraid? You forget that I can manage a boat, although I cannot direct a Sunday school," said Teenie, laughing, but with just a shade of bitterness in her tone.

Grace got in, and seated herself at the stern as she had been told. The dog did not follow.

"Come, Pate, come—for shame, sir, to desert me!—but you can go home if you like."

The dog shook himself, glanced backwards as if he were much more disposed to take his tail between his legs and make for home, than to go on. But he advanced shyly, and at the next sound of his mistress's voice, leapt into the boat and crouched at her feet, looking up into her face as if wondering what this strange vagary could mean. He had never been accustomed to the water, and he did not like it.

Teenie pushed the boat off, and sprang in, nimbly enough, but the effort this cost reminded her unpleasantly of how much strength she had lost.

She paddled slowly out of the bay, and the moment they passed beyond the sheltering arms of the rocks, the little craft began to pitch and toss in a manner most uncomfortable to Grace. Several splashes of spray threatened to spoil the ladies' hats, and warned them that they were likely to get well wet. Teenie was indifferent for her own part, but she saw Grace clutch the side of the boat and look anxiously around; then she looked also.

The waves came sweeping inward, white-crested and murmuring—they were like long arms reaching out to grasp a victim. Overhead, great stretches of blue-black clouds scored with pale amber: a red glow on the western horizon, from which radiated long smoky wreaths reaching the borders of a light golden lake, and that again was studded with black ragged islets. Eastward, a pale mist rising, like a veil, and spreading slowly over the sea, bringing night as it seemed with all its mysteries. The sea, dark green flecked with white heads; and

the long-sweeping waves sang plaintive duets with the wind, now loud and furious, again soft and gentle as the voice of syrens tempting men to destruction.

"I'm doubting there is to be a storm," said Teenie after looking round; "we'll keep inshore."

"I am sure there is to be a storm," rejoined Grace, calmly, but making no attempt to conceal the uneasiness she felt. "Did you not see the birds?—they knew it. Do you not see Pate, how he is shivering?—he knows it. I wish you would go in, Teenie, these waves are so strong and terrible."

"They are very beautiful." She shook back from her shoulders the long hair, dripping with spray, and gazed at the threatening sea with as much fondness as a mermaid who loved it even in its angriest mood.

"Do make for the shore, Teenie," said Grace, shuddering as she looked at the waves.

Teenie ceased rowing, but continued to steady the boat with the oars.

"I will in a minute—but I have been selfish again, Grace. I want to say something to you, and I thought I would feel stronger to say it if we were out on the sea. I want you to do something very great for me, and I never could have told you except here."

"What is it?"

Words came abruptly just then, for Grace disliked the position altogether. The boat lurched to one side; Grace gave a little scream, and that concealed the half-stifled sob with which Teenie began to speak.

"It is about that money—about your mother" (setting her teeth hard, then); "I want you to get it in time to save Dal-mahoy, and you shall have it all back as soon as my father comes home. Your mother has refused, but if you speak to her she will do it for your sake. Oh, Grace! I feel that I shall never be able to lift up my head again if the Laird is turned out of his home, if his daughters are made beggars all through me—through me. Will you do this?—beg, pray, promise anything that may tempt her, only to save them, and she shall have it all back in a very wee while."

Teenie's eyes and voice were full of tears, and Grace in her sympathy almost forgot the perils of their position.

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"I will try, Teenie; I intended to do my best even without your speaking; but my mother is very stubborn in this matter—she is a little queer and does not quite understand the position; but if she can be persuaded to help us, I will persuade her, for Walter's sake and yours."

"But there must be no 'if's'—you must *make* her do it whether she will or no.—Lord help me! I'm feared that my head is going wrong, for I feel that I could rob—aye, murder to get that miserable siller. You may guess that, when I beg of you, when you see me ready to go down on my knees to you, craving that you would only save them. Oh, I think I will hate you if you fail!—and yet no, no, Grace, I cannot do that; I will aye like you—love you, whether you save them or no."

She dropped at the feet of Grace, sobbing, and the dog whined as if in sympathy or terror. The positions were so entirely reversed—the one who had been so bold and fearless was now so weak and humbled, the other who had been so weak was now so calm and brave—that Grace herself was most astonished at herself and at Teenie. The latter's passionate appeal made Grace's heart beat fast with affectionate pity, although she could not realize the bitterness of humiliation which Teenie experienced in making this petition to her, who she felt ought to have been the most uncompromising of foes.

The boat gave another lurch, and one of the oars went overboard; Grace almost capsized the craft in the wild effort she made to clutch it as it swept by on the crest of a wave.

"For God's sake, Teenie, save us!" cried Grace in alarm.

Teenie rose in a dazed way, and almost fell with the heaving of the boat; but she steadied herself and caught the remaining oar just as it too was about to slip through the rowlocks.

The white mist was rapidly approaching them; in a little while it would be over them, and would shut out the land from their sight, so that they might be for hours tossed about upon the waves without any chance of landing—if they were not swamped long before the mist cleared away. Teenie was conscious of all their danger in an instant; she sought for the missing oar, and when she understood what had happened her face darkened, for the peril was even greater than she had anticipated at the first glance of their position. She looked at Grace, and for an instant a wicked thought possessed her—why

should she not leave the boat to its fate, and die there with her? The kindly sea was offering her peace, oblivion, and an end to all sorrow; why should she struggle against it? Why struggle to live when living was a constant agony and shame?

White-faced and trembling, she turned away from the wicked thought; what a coward love had made her!—she almost feared the sea; she did fear the temptation which was presented to her.

There was a distant murmur as of muffled thunder, and she knew that one of the fierce and vicious squalls which beset the coast was approaching. How many had perished in its fatal swoop! how little hope there was for them in that frail craft at such a moment! But Grace was to be saved—Lord forgive her!—she thought that for herself she would have made no effort. Then over the dismal gloom of the waters there came the cry of a babe in the manse high up yonder on Drumliemount, and she felt very guilty. There was something to do for Grace's sake, and for the babe's sake.

They had drifted towards Kingshaven Bar—a most dangerous part of the coast in a storm; the ugly shape of the ominous rock called the Wrecker, loomed before them. If they could only pass it they would be safe; or if they could only reach the creek which they were nearing they would escape all serious danger.

Grace was silent and pale, watching Teenie anxiously, but without making a movement or uttering a word to disturb her. Pate whined occasionally, and nestled more closely to the feet of his mistress.

Teenie was guiding the boat by the help of the single oar; suddenly she wheeled it round, pointing the head towards the creek.

"Sit still," she said between her teeth; "hold the tiller straight; our only chance is to go in with the tide. Yonder is a wave coming that will either carry us in or to the bottom."

She changed her seat to a place beside Grace, holding the oar with one hand, whilst with the other she grasped the tiller.

"When I say 'Steady,' hold firm for your life."

There was a strange pause—a momentary silence of sea and wind.

"Do you think," said Teenie timorously, "if—if we should

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sink—do you think you could go up yonder with no ill thought in your heart towards me?"

The only reply of Grace was to clasp fervently the hand which rested on the tiller.

Teenie gave the boat one last jerk towards the sheltering creek, drew in the oar, and clasped both hands on those of Grace; they held the tiller between them, whilst affection and forgiveness of all sins were expressed in that loving clasp which meant to them life or death.

"Steady!" cried Teenie, "here is our safety or our death."

The mist was following fast, it was already near them, it would soon be overhead—then it would reach the rocky shore, and escape would be almost impossible. The great sea rolled shoreward, swinging the boat up and down. Then came the huge wave upon which Teenie counted to carry them into the creek; but if it should break before they touched the land, or if it should draw them back with it even when they were nearest to safety!—that was a terrible thought.

Everything depended on being able to keep the prow steadily towards the creek. The wave struck the boat with mighty force—hoisted it high in the air, so that the breath left Teenie and Grace; they felt as if suspended above the water, and that presently they must drop into an abyss. But their hands clenched the more tightly upon the tiller; they pressed their bodies close against it and, lips compressed, faces white, and hearts still, they watched the dark inlet upon which they were driving—it seemed almost flying. The time was brief, but an age of memories flashed through the minds of the two women as they sat, hands clasped, awaiting the fortune of life or death.

They were driven into the creek; the boat dropped, the keel grated upon sharp stones, then it reeled and staggered as one wave seemed to draw it backward, and another, overleaping the receding one, helped it forward.

Teenie caught up the rope which was fastened to a ring at the prow, and sprang into the water. She scrambled across sharp boulders on to a ledge of rock, and exerting all her strength, she drew the boat close up to the side, where only the spent waves and dashes of spray reached it.

Grace made her way forward, climbing over the seats awkwardly, and grasping Teenie's helping hand, stepped on to the ledge.

"Safe, thank God!" she said quietly; "thank you, Teenie."

"Little thanks to me, who brought you into the danger. And see, you're drenched to the skin—you'll get your death of cold."

Grace smiled—feebly, for she felt very weak.

"You are no better off yourself."

"It does not matter for me," was the indifferent answer, but so low that amidst the roar of waters Grace did not hear the words distinctly.

Pate scrambled up beside them, looking very much cowed; but he gave himself a shake of satisfaction when he found that he was safe on land.

Teenie unfastened the rope from the boat.

"Walter has told me about folk climbing the Alps, how they are all tied together with a rope, so that if one slips, the others save him from tumbling down. So we'll tie ourselves with this and if you should miss your foot, I'll keep you from falling."

Grace would have objected, but when she looked up at the rugged face of the rocks they had to climb, she yielded to Teenie's plans.

"I've often gone up these rocks for fun, and I can do it the easier now that it's a necessity. It's not so hard as it looks, and Pate will follow us."

She knew every step of the way, and with her sure foot and steady eye there was not much danger in the ascent, but to Grace it was full of peril. At times she thought the sea was rolling up the crags, intent upon claiming the victims who had so narrowly escaped its wrath. Then the white mist enveloped them, so that she could barely see where to plant her feet, where to catch with her hands. She felt giddy, and would have certainly fallen, but for the wise precaution which Teenie had adopted. She made even a greater effort to keep steady than she might have been capable of had she been alone, knowing that any stumble endangered Teenie's life as well as her own.

They attained the summit at last, and stepped out upon the road. The dog capered about wildly for joy; the two women sat down to rest. Grace was warm with grateful thoughts; Teenie was pallid, cold, and shivering now that the danger was

past—she who had been so firm and skilful whilst these qualities were most needed.

"Walter will be so vexed with me," she said slowly, as she unfastened the rope from her waist.

"He will be too glad and too thankful to see you safe, Teenie, to be vexed with you. Oh, what a strong, brave woman you are!"

She kissed her affectionately, and then uttered a little cry of amazement and alarm, for not the weak woman, but the strong one, gave way, and Grace found Teenie fainting in her arms. The strain had been too much for her, and she lay there by the roadside, quite helpless.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THROUGH THE MIST.

GRACE in the first moment of alarm looked hurriedly up and down the road, in the hope of seeing some one who might assist her. But the mist enveloped them so closely that she could not see clearly beyond a few yards distance. There was no sound but the wild sough of the wind, and the angry voice of the sea breaking against the rocks below. She shuddered at the recollection of their narrow escape—an escape entirely due to Teenie's skill and courage.

She hastily unfastened her friend's dress at the neck, wiped the pale face with her wet cloak, and then vigorously chafed the cold hands. The dog, meanwhile, was moving round the two women as if with a human sense of their distress and eager to relieve it.

"Walter, Walter!" said Grace tremulously.

That was a name with which Pate was familiar, and next to his mistress, no one had been so kind to him as the young minister. He stood a minute as if trying to understand what was expected from him. Then with a yelp he sprang forward and disappeared in the mist.

The sky seemed to darken, and the mist changed from white to black; the sea roared louder and angrier at every moment; the wind swept over them with a keener blast and more dismal cry than before. Grace, shivering in her wet clothes, continued her efforts to restore animation to Teenie's cold limbs, and was at length gratified by signs of recovery.

Teenie drew a long breath, and began to open her eyes, staring bewilderedly about her. Just then a man's voice was heard in the darkness which surrounded them.

"Good heavens, Grace! what have you been doing?"

"We have been nearly drowned, and Teenie has fainted."

"How thoughtless she is!" he exclaimed, and stooping he took her very tenderly in his arms, murmuring, "My poor, brave lass."

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She made a slight movement as if to repulse him, and then she clung to his protecting arms. Without observing the first movement, he raised her up, passed his hand over her brow, and addressed to her warm and loving words. Then, as if remembering Grace, suddenly he said—

"I have been seeking you everywhere—I could not believe that Teenie would have taken you out in the boat with the signs of a storm so clear before her, and she knows them so well. When I saw Pate I thought you had taken a walk instead of a sail."

"I don't think Teenie noticed how stormy the sea looked when we went out," said Grace.

"Oh, but I did," cried Teenie, starting up, with a curious laugh; "and, as Wattie might think, I wanted to drown you. But I was not thinking of that, Grace; it's just as he says, I am so thoughtless. There never was danger on the sea to me, and I forgot that you were different. Oh, I have been so thoughtless that I have spoiled all our lives!"

There was an undercurrent of passionate bitterness in her voice that startled both listeners; and the surprise was increased by the suddenness with which she rose to her feet; if she had been only shamming instead of having been in a faint, she could not have regained consciousness and strength more rapidly.

Her words were cruel to Walter, because they indicated so much doubt of his love for her; and they seemed cruel to Grace, because they harped upon a subject which she had been implored not to mention again. But Teenie had not the least idea of the unpleasant interpretations which were placed on her words; she felt a pang and she uttered it. She had no thought of giving pain to any one.

"Take my arm," said the husband, "and let us get up to the house."

"No, give Grace your arm, and she will take mine on the other side. I'm all right again, but we must walk quickly to keep the cold out. Come along."

She shivered with cold as she spoke, her wet garments clinging closely about her. They stepped forward in the order she had arranged, and she really seemed to have all the strength she professed to have. She talked and laughed as if there had

been no danger, and as if there were no discomfort in their present condition.

"We're a bonnie pair of ducks, Grace, with our draiglet tails. The mist has just come on to save us from being laughed at by the folk.—You should have been with us, Wattie; it was grand to see the big waves come tumbling in upon us, and to see Grace sitting as quiet as though she had been on the water all her life, when if she had budged, or fainted like me, we'd have gone to the bottom as sure as death."

The latter expression added much solemnity to any declaration of the country folk.

"You have given me a fright, Teenie, although you don't seem to be much frightened yourself," answered Walter, trying to smile, yet feeling uneasy at her strange humour.

"It will do you good, and keep you from thinking of other matters which will be all right in a few days."

She was quite cheery as she pressed the arm of Grace, whilst making this allusion to the bargain they had made. But all the time there was running through her head a bitter recollection of those old letters, and of the unrequited love she had discovered in them. How she admired Grace, and how she envied her the brave generous calmness with which she had sacrificed to him her dearest hopes! And how she wished that she had never known how very dear those hopes had been!

Grace could talk well enough when alone with Teenie or Walter, but always felt as if she had nothing to say when with them both; she was even sensible of some awkwardness. She was annoyed with herself for this, because she had nothing to speak about to the one that she would not have told to the other. The awkward feeling was there, however, and despite herself she could not overcome it—just because a third person always has the influence of a non-conductor upon all sympathetic conversation. She felt this more keenly than usual on the present occasion, when she wished most to speak so as to bring these two closer together than they seemed to be.

She had an instinctive sense that she was standing on a volcano, which would presently break forth, carrying destruction to all things near it. But she knew so little—the inner doubts of Walter and Teenie had been so carefully hidden from her, that whatever she might suspect she dared not speak.

Walter was so quiet and reserved ; Teenie was so boisterous and strange : presenting two opposing elements which would not unite : and Grace was frightened—more frightened than she had been when in peril of her life a little while ago—although she could not say why.

She tried to explain to him the adventure of the afternoon, and how bravely Teenie had acted ; but Teenie always interrupted, laughed at the danger, and made light of her own exertions, attributing the whole success of their rescue to the calmness of Grace.

They reached Drumliemount at last, and notwithstanding their wet clothes, they were heated by the exercise of the walk.

"The very best thing for us," said Teenie, and she insisted upon seeing to the comfort of her guest before she would do anything for herself.

When everything had been provided for Grace, Teenie went to her own room and changed her clothes. She was fastening her gown when Walter entered and, placing his hands on her shoulders, looked inquiringly and fondly into her eyes.

"What is the matter, Teenie—have I done anything to annoy you ?"

"Me!—no ; why shou'd you think that ?"

"You have been so excited !"

"Because I am blither than I have been for a long while—Dalmahoy will not be sold, Wattie, and that is one misfortune the less of the many I have brought to you."

She gave him a short quick kiss, and resumed her toilet.

"You dear, stupid lassie !" he said, placing his arm around her, "you have brought me no misfortune ; and you have taught me many things without the knowledge of which I never could have hoped to accomplish anything. Why will you persist in regretting our marriage ? I shall begin to think that you liked somebody else better than me."

She wheeled round, one side of her hair in her mouth, the other held out at its full length whilst the brush was applied to the roots—and stopped there.

"Are you quite sure," she said, speaking through the hair, "that you do not like somebody else better than me ?"

"Quite sure," was the frank and immediate response, "if you would only be reasonable."

She proceeded with the arrangement of her hair.

"Just that—but I'm not reasonable, and so you can't be sure."

"What is the matter with you?" exclaimed Walter, utterly puzzled, a little vexed, but anxious to avoid anything like a misunderstanding.

"Nothing, except that Dalmahoy is to be saved, and I am awfully proud and happy."

"How?"

"I'll tell you in a week or so. Now go and send down to the inn for a gig, so that you may drive Grace home. She will never be able to walk."

She had not been in such gay spirits since the birth of Baby. Walter was not satisfied; there was something unnatural in this sudden gaiety which puzzled as well as astonished him. However, he carried out her wishes regarding the gig. When they met at the tea-table, Teenie was almost if not quite as bright as in the old days, before she had learned any sense of fear. To Grace she was devoted with that eager and hearty hospitality, which receives its best reward in being cordially accepted. Grace, although quiet, gave that most desirable reward to Teenie's exertions, and could not help laughing at the absurd way in which the young wife represented their plight in the boat, although she still regarded the position as almost too serious to be joked about.

After tea, the gig was at the gate, and Walter was ready to drive his cousin home. Grace hesitated, and asked if there was not a man from the inn; but Teenie scouted the idea of any one but Walter taking her home. She was very particular in wrapping up her guest warmly, to protect her from the mist and night air; she fastened the shawls with her own hands, and tucked in the rug under Grace's feet. The last word whispered to her was "Remember."

"You may be sure of that," answered Grace, pressing her hand affectionately.

And so they drove off.

Teenie proceeded to attend to various household affairs, to see that Baby was comfortably settled for the night, and to tell

Lizzie, the sleepy domestic, that she might go to bed. When all was done, she went into her husband's room, sat down, got up, and fidgeted about in a restless way. The lamp displeased her ; now it was burning too high, again too low, and she suddenly turned it out altogether ; then she had to hunt for matches to relight it. She sat down again, an elbow on the table, her head resting on the hand, whilst the fingers of the other hand traced imaginary hieroglyphics on the table-cover.

She was in a very contradictory mood—hope, passion, love, and spleen—or jealousy ?—born of the love, and of the torturing conviction that her love had wrought pain where it ought to have brought happiness. But she had resolved to be merry—resolved to go back to the old blithe days when she had neither fear nor doubt of the future. Dalmahoy was to be saved, and then her father would come back like the grand prince in the ballad, would put everything right, and she would be so proud of him ! Then what had she to trouble herself about ?

In answer, there came a vision of the gig driving through the mist across the moorland, Grace sitting couthily by Walter's side, and not anxious to be home ; he with his grave face eagerly watchful of the road, lest in the darkness they should meet with an accident. Both silent—or perhaps Grace was talking, and her sweet low voice would remind him of all that he had lost for one who had brought him neither wit nor wealth—one who had brought him nothing but ill-fortune since their troth had been first plighted.

Would he think of that ? And if he did, would he not regret what he had done ? He must do so ; he must think of the Methven estate, the expectation of which had reconciled him to marrying her ; and he must feel the chagrin of one who discovers that he has been induced to make a bargain under false pretences. She winced cruelly at that ; and for an instant she had a vague idea that these thoughts were degrading to Walter, therefore degrading to herself ; that she was forgetting all his tokens of love, and that she was overlooking the brave, self-forgetful loyalty of Grace.

Baby cried, and she flew to him ; he was teething and he was fractious. She tried all motherly arts to soothe him to sleep ; she talked to him in the sweet nonsensical prattle which is the recognised language of babyhood ; she sang to him in a

tender undertone, but it was that sad ballad "The Lass of Lochryan" which rose to her lips, and almost unconsciously she repeated one of the saddest of its verses :—

"Fair Annie turned her round about—
'Weel, since that it be sae,
May never a woman that has borne a son
Hae a heart sae fou o' wae."

Baby fell asleep to that eerie wail, and she stole softly downstairs. She went to the door to listen for the sound of the returning wheels. The lamp in the window above the doorway cast a few rays of light into the darkness, only to render the blackness beyond the more dense. The light fell upon the gravel at her feet, and she herself stood like a black streak against the light from the room behind her. She heard nothing save the wild uproar of the wind, occasionally broken by the distant and melancholy roll of the sea.

"God help my father this night," she murmured, and thinking of him, the hardness which had been growing round her heart whilst she brooded about Walter and Grace was softened ; so she added, penitently and tenderly, "and God help Wattie, too, for he has much to bear."

She remained a long time at the door ; and fancy raised strange phantasmagoria in the darkness. She saw mysterious forms slowly shaping out of the gloom, rising up and towering above her as if they would fall and crush her, then suddenly breaking against the few rays of light—but only to be followed by others ; trees and bushes seemed to walk towards her through the shadow, assuming fearful shapes, and all threatening her.

"It's an awful night," she muttered, going in and closing the door after her, whilst she shivered with cold and terror at the phantoms she had seen.

Walter was driving cautiously across the moor, feeling the penetrating mist and wind despite his wraps, and he was muttering to himself—

"Why is it we cannot understand each other ? Is it that she cannot or will not try ?"

He took the gig down to the inn, and walked home. He did

not see the light until close to the gate. When he opened the door, she sprang out to meet him.

"You are safe!" she cried with passionate delight; and all the hardness which had been growing upon him, too, disappeared.

"Quite safe," he said, embracing her fondly.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

NIGHT.

WITH the morning Teenie's hopes increased, and her gaiety of spirits ran up to the height of the thermometer. She would explain nothing to Walter, but she was merry—very gentle and attentive to him. She thought of many things to add to his comfort which she had hitherto neglected. She seemed to be happy, and trying to make him so.

Gloomy as was the position in which he found himself, and discontented as he felt inclined to be at times with her apparently unreasonable gaiety, it was an unspeakable joy to him to see her glad, and the shadows of all her threatening ailments cast a long way behind her. What an inscrutable creature she was! now bright as the morning, and again dark and sad as the night.

He had often puzzled himself about her; often when annoyed by her thoughtless ways, even when he had been speaking to her sternly—cruelly, she would have said—he was questioning himself about her, asking if he did not misunderstand her altogether, and if some other conduct on his part might not draw her down to the level of ordinary mortals, or up to it.

But the fitful humours which he could not control remained and baffled him. She irritated him, drove him to the brink of fierce passion, and then a few winning childish words, and he took her to his breast, ready to brave any calamity for her sake and so that she might not suffer.

He took himself severely to task. He had introduced this child into a new life, a new world. Had he guided her steps with sufficient care? He had tried to do so—God knew how earnestly he had tried—but had he succeeded? He had miscalculated his own fortunes; the unexpected distress of Dalmahoy added to his embarrassment—since the blame of it could be charged to him—and amidst all this confusion of troubles,

could he say that he had fulfilled his duty to her ? No. The sense of failure in himself was so keen that he was ready to accept any blame. But that did not make their life any the more satisfactory.

There had been growing up between them a mysterious something, palpable to both, inexplicable to both—a something which they strove with all their might to repress. Yet it grew, and they were conscious that this monster was separating them, slowly but surely, in spite of all their efforts to extinguish it. They were like two people cast from a wreck upon the sea ; they strove to keep together, they prayed to be permitted to keep side by side ; but the waves rolled up and they were drifted apart, each straining the eyes to keep the other in sight. They wished otherwise, but the waves were stronger than their wishes.

As the days passed, and no message came from Grace, Teenie's humour underwent many changes—gay, sad, defiant, hysterical. To Walter it was torture. He coaxed, he scolded, he implored without effect. It was an April mood, and neither his rage nor his love could change its course.

At length Grace came herself, and Teenie read at once in the sad eyes that she had failed ; Dame Wishart was inexorable in her resolution to give no help.

"Did you try !" said Teenie fiercely.

"If it had been for myself I could not have done more," was the answer.

"You promised that you would arrange it ?"

"I can do nothing without my mother's sanction."

"Why does she refuse when she knows that we have no other help at hand—when she knows that her money will be repaid in a few months, with whatever interest she wants ?"

Grace turned her head away. She could not answer that question, and she could not meet the angry gaze of the young wife.

"My mother is not well, and she has strange fancies. She is unusually stubborn on this subject."

"Because of me," exclaimed Teenie bitterly ; then passionately, "and—oh, Lord—it *is* possible to see folk drowning, and keep back the hand that would save them ! But it's me—it's me that is to blame for it all."

"There is time yet, Teenie."

"Time. Will she change her mind?"

"I hope so," faltered Grace. She could not say more, for indeed she had no hope.

Teenie understood, and she was ungraciously exasperated by the attempt to console her. She had built so much upon the success of Grace in persuading her mother to advance the money, that the disappointment was to her generous, passionate nature, unbearable. The one clear idea that she had was, that her marriage to Walter was the only cause of Dame Wishart's obstinacy in this matter—which was the fact—and that, therefore, the whole misfortune of the Dalmahoy family rested on her shoulders.

The thought stung her almost to frenzy. She found difficulty in speaking to Grace with anything like calmness; she could not find the least comfort in reassuring hopes which were whispered to her; and she was much relieved when left alone. All the bright visions of the last few days were dissipated; ruin was at hand, and she was the cause. That was all she understood.

"Oh, if my father would only come back!" she moaned, leaning her head against the wall for support.

Was there nothing she could do? A piteous wail seemed to rise up from her heart, echoing the terrible word "nothing." If she had been out of the way, if she had refused him when he asked her to be his wife, there would have been none of this trouble. That thought made her fierce, then spiteful against herself, Walter, Grace, and everybody; and presently she was furious with herself for feeling so vicious.

He came home late in the evening, very tired. The coming Sabbath was fixed for the administration of the Sacrament, and during the day he had been obliged to visit many of his parishioners, whose houses lay far apart. It had been an anxious day mentally; physically his limbs had been severely taxed, and indeed, but for an occasional lift in a farmer's gig, he could not have accomplished all that he had done.

He was served with a steak burnt to a cinder. The knife chipped off splinters, but could not cut it. He made a feeble joke about meat being transformed into sawdust, and to his amazement he encountered a sharp retort to the effect that he

was always complaining, and that if he wanted fine cookery he ought to engage a cook. He was innocent of the least thought of complaining.

Is it not wonderful that a tiny spark will blow up a huge powder magazine, which till that moment remained so quiet and harmless-looking? Is it not wonderful that a little touch of electricity, travelling miles in mystery, will discharge a torpedo, which blows a big ship into the air with all its freight of life, hopes, and fears?

They never knew how it came about. The pitiful trifles which involve great crises always pass unnoticed. But presently the magazine exploded; she was passionately upbraiding him; he was coldly answering. She was suddenly fired by the accumulation of jealous thoughts which she had hitherto held in check; he for the first time remembered that he had sacrificed some position and much comfort in marrying her. At the same moment he checked the thought, and felt that there was something mean in his nature which allowed it to rise at all.

At length she said, desperately, unthinkingly—

"You would be glad if you had never married me. It would have been a good thing for me if you hadn't."

She was in consternation at her own words the moment they were uttered. She felt that they had been spoken by her evil genius—not by herself. She was bitterly sorry; yet the evil genius held her under its sway, and she could not instantly recall the words; she could not, as she wished to do, throw herself upon his neck and implore his pardon.

But she glanced timorously at him from under her eyebrows.

He stood quite dazed, glaring at her; then his brow darkened—he was reviewing himself even then, and taking blame to himself.

He spoke in cold deliberate tones, every word falling on her heart like a blow.

"Yes, it would have been—better for you—had we never been married."

He did not say that it would have been better for him if they had never been married, but she did not observe the difference. Even then he remembered the sweet thoughts and brave aspirations which she had inspired, and he was grateful

to her ; all his nature throbbed with affection for her, and yet he remained apparently cold and stern.

But she only felt that something had snapped ; the last cord which held them together seemed to be rent ; and with a low cry of pain she sank on a chair.

He walked quickly from the room—quickly, or he would have seen her with head bowed almost to her knees, hands spread over her face, sobbing ; and the sight would have brought him to her side again, full of remorse, and taking all the blame to himself. He did not see that ; the torture in which they had been living was to end ; better it should end now, he thought ; and so he hurried away, and shut himself up in his study.

She heard the door close, and it seemed to her as if he had shut her out from his heart for ever. She felt like one who, still living, hears the knell for her own funeral.

What had she done ? She had driven him away from her. She had forced upon him the conviction of her unsuitability to be his wife. She had compelled him to regret that he had married her !

She did not even yet see the difference his words had expressed, between regretting the marriage on her account, and on his own. Perhaps he was glad—he would think of Grace, and would wish that he had never seen Teenie.

A hard, wicked feeling crept over her, and she was tempted to a desperate step. She would go away, and leave him free to think of Grace ; that would at any rate be a kindness to him. And maybe, when she was away, he would divine something of the pain which she had endured because she loved him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FOR HIS SAKE.

SHE was frightened at the mad impulse which stirred within her. Go away—where? She did not know. She might go down to the Norlan' Head, and resume the old life just as if there had been no marriage and no baby. But she could not do that, for Ailie, with her plain matter-of-fact way of viewing things, would seize her by the arm and drag her back to Drumliemount.

She was in a dazed state: thoughts quite confused, and uncontrollable: blood pulsing violently through her veins, and the sense of a big pain in her breast which would presently make her heart burst. But there was one leading thought which, like the air in a fantasia, although often apparently drowned by the loud notes of the variations, was always present, and was the theme and inspiration of all the rest. If she could only go away and hide herself somewhere, Walter would be free to think of Grace. If she were only out of the way, Dame Wishart would not hesitate to give the necessary assistance to Dalmahoy.

It was a foolish idea, but she was in a species of frenzy, in which she only saw that her presence there was the cause of infinite embarrassment to her husband, and would be the cause of ruin to his family. Love and pride combined to urge her to any sacrifice to serve them, and a childish ignorance of the world's ways made her fancy that she had only to go away, and all would be set right.

She was full of bitterness at thought of the quarrel with Walter; and her sufferings were all the more poignant because she was conscious that she had provoked it, and had taken the leading part in it. But he had not tried to save her from herself. If he had only spoken one kind word, if he had only crossed the room and kissed her, all her passion would have disappeared, and she would have been ready to lie down at his

feet and die for his sake. But he had not spoken, although he must have known that it would have been the truest kindness to have done so. He could not care for her as he used to do, or he would have done that.

Kind acts are the crystals of affection, the beautiful tokens of love, which has no other visible presence. Clearly he did not care for her, or he would not have failed at this crisis to win her back to him by some kind act or word. Morbid meditations are a sort of waking nightmare; and with all the horrors of nightmare there came back to her just now the memory of that miserable assertion of the Laird, that Walter had believed her to be the heiress of George Metaven when he asked her to be his wife. At that, Passion rose again, and she was ready to misinterpret his every action, from the day on which she had listened to his confession in the Witch's Bay till the present moment. But Love cried out; and although in the storm of Passion its voice was scarcely heard at first, the sound soon swelled, until it overcame all other sounds, and left her crying, only wishing that she could do anything—sacrifice anything to make him happy.

And she could sacrifice something—herself. She could go away, and that would remove every difficulty from his path.

"Oh, if my father would only come home!" she moaned again. "Maybe I could find him. Maybe he'll touch at Lerwick or Aberdeen, and I might meet him, and bring him back in time; or we could go away and never come back, and Walter would be happy."

There came a dreamy revival of the old yearning for the unknown something beyond the horizon of her life, and she got up slowly. Her eyes were dry now, and they had that expressionless inward look of one walking in sleep.

She went up stairs, and put on her cloak and hat. She tied the strings very tightly. A slight cry from Baby's crib, and she stood like one petrified. Then she flew to his side and bent over him, feeling that here was a chain which held her fast to husband and home. Would she ever be able to break the chain? Could she go away, leaving the bairn for strange hands to nurse? leaving him to grow up to manhood without knowing his mother's face? Could she make this sacrifice, too, for Walter's sake!

Her heart was cruelly racked by the conflict of emotions ; for Walter's sake she would go, for Baby's sake she must stay. She swayed to and fro above the child, now bent upon the one course, again upon the other. If Baby had only wakened, he would have conquered ; but after that first little cry he had got the feeder in his mouth, and after a vigorous attack he dozed off again, without opening his eyes upon the yearning, troubled face of the mother bending over him. The openings to the right path and the wrong are divided only by such trifling accidents as this, the sleeping or the waking of a babe.

As she raised her head the room seemed to darken suddenly. It was only the candle which required snuffing, and the wick was spluttering in a ring of grease. But, with her nerves tense-strung, old childish superstitions possessed her ; the shadows in the room assumed fateful forms ; she looked at the candle with a dreamy eagerness to descry one of those tiny sparks on the burning wick, which were supposed to indicate coming messages of good or evil. She saw none.

She snuffed the candle, and in the bright flame which sprang up, her face appeared white and cold. There was a shadow on the brow, reflecting the gloom and bitterness of her thoughts. How very bad she felt herself to be ! how wickedly she had blundered, and blundered with her eyes open ! If Walter had not told her about Grace, then she would have been able to feel that this misery had not been brought about by any act of her own. But he had told her everything, and she alone was to blame for it all. She ought to have known that it was selfishness which tempted her to say yes, when she should have said no. If she had only had a little pride, then she might have said no. But she loved him so very much that she could not turn away from him ; and now it had come to pass that, even for his sake, she must go away.

If Grace had been selfish or unkind in any way, she could have endured everything ; but the grand self-forgetful love of Grace shamed her, and made her feel that she had been mean and cruel. At moments she felt as if she hated Grace for her devotion ; even the child turned to her with smiles of delight whenever she appeared. Next moment all the rage was against herself for the wickedness of her jealousy. She only thought that they would be very happy if she were away.

She moved towards the door, and then the mother's heart cried out again. She swayed a minute between the passionate yearning for her child and the extravagant idea of self-sacrifice for Walter's sake, for the bairn's, and for Grace's sake, which was driving her to despair.

She wheeled round, dropped on her knees at the foot of the crib, her hands clutching the iron bars convulsively.

"Dear Father, which art in heaven . . . help me . . . teach me what I am to do, that they may be happy. Walter is very good and kind. . . . She is very true and noble. Dear Father I have wronged them both very much. Help me to make them happy. I only want to make them happy, and I'll do anything that You will for their sake. . . . I'm an awfully poor creature, but I dinna want to hurt anybody. Help me, then, and guide my steps so that there may be bright sunshiny days yet in store for them. You who see all hearts, look into mine, and see that I want everything for him and for the bonnie bairn You sent to me—nothing for myself. . . . Dear Lord, help me, and guide me."

She stayed a long time on her knees there, the past life and the many sad passages in it flitting through her mind ; the wild act she meditated obtaining consistency and justification from the fancied regrets of her husband, and from her desire to do anything that might give him comfort.

She quite misunderstood him—misunderstood his words, his looks, and his sorrow—and she suffered accordingly. If he had only come up-stairs then ! But he did not come ; and she felt, in her rapid changes of humour, spiteful towards him that he could have left her in such distress without any effort to see her and to console her.

She got up, not daring to look at Baby, and went out of the room quickly. Down-stairs she halted at the door of his study. Her fingers trembled on the handle, and she listened. There was no sound. If he would only speak, only breathe her name—one word, and she would be saved. But he was silent.

She touched the door with her lips ; then a passionate sob, and she ran out of the house.

He had heard the fingers on the handle ; he had heard the sob, and yet he would not move. He remained with his eyes fixed upon a book, to the words of which they were utterly blind

His heart was very hard. She had been cruel to him—cruel to Grace; and his bitterest thought was that she had shown this cruel disposition when he most needed comfort, when he most craved for loving sympathy, which gives courage and strength. He would not move.

Yet a cold feeling of desolation crept over him as he heard the wind sighing wildly round the house, mingled with the distant roar of the sea. In the brief hush which occurred at intervals he heard that low piteous sob again, and he was filled with vague unrest.

Teenie was so fierce and impulsive, so reckless of herself, that when roused to passion such as he had seen her in to-night, God only knew what wild or silly act she might do. Then she was so generous—what pain she must be suffering!

He got up hastily and crossed the floor, halted at the door, turned slowly back towards his chair; wheeled round again, altered his mind once more, flung the book from him and sat down, pressing his hands as in a vice between his knees.

He would not go to her at present; he would leave her to think out the matter for herself, leave her to sleep off the fit of passion, and in the morning he would endeavour to show her how mistaken she was. She had gone to bed, no doubt, he would not disturb her this night.

He took up the book again, and applied himself to its perusal resolutely. His eyes wandered over the words; mechanically the leaves were turned—the mind grasped nothing. Impatiently he looked back to see what he had been reading; he made out half a sentence, then went on as before—Teenie, the quarrel, the vague fears, dancing like tiny silhouette figures before him, and not a word of the book was plain to him.

A door banged, and he started quite nervously. What a draught swept in, how cold it was, and how fiercely the wind blew! The air was full of strange voices, and the silhouettes became more frantic in their eerie dance.

His elbow on the arm of the chair, he rested his cheek on his knuckles. This was a bad preparation for the Sacrament Sabbath: to-morrow, Saturday; then the Sabbath. He had worked hard preparing the younger members of his flock for the Sacrament; he had given out the tokens, and he felt himself now to be the most unfit person to approach the tables. He made a

stubborn effort to wrench his mind into a better form, and failed. It was Teenie who flitted before his eyes, disturbing him and rendering all thought, except of her, impossible.

He did not blame her much—he was full of sorrow on her account and his own. He had made her so miserable—she who had always been so happy, always like a gleam of sunshine, beautiful in herself, and a source of joy to others.

Whatever his frailties or errors might be, Walter was thoroughly honest in thought and intention, always more anxious to see the right of the other side in any argument than to justify himself. His love for her never changed. In all the troubles which had come upon them, he had never repented the marriage; his only regret was that she had to suffer with him, when he had hoped that their life would be so quiet and simple!

How terribly he had miscalculated his position, and the possibilities of happiness which it offered! Petty squabbles in connection with the kirk, disputes with the heritors and elders; the pitiful need of pence, in spite of the most niggardly economy, which was a torture to him, not because he had to exercise self-denial, but because he had to deny her so much, and because there were so many things he wished her to have. He writhed under this miserable necessity, thinking of her. How many bitter thoughts he had hidden from her; what agony he had suffered when her eyes had gazed wistfully at some woman's prize in a shop window—a bonnet, a shawl, or a jewel—which he could not give her. He knew all about covetousness and the wickedness of it, but such a very little money would have made her so happy! Self-denial is an admirable principle; economy is beautiful—in the abstract—but when one is obliged to practise it constantly, the heart becomes hard and miserly, or it suffers torture.

Then he saw so many people rich and mean, or rich and merry, never requiring to deny anything to those they loved, and apparently not a bit the worse for their wealth and self-indulgence; he sometimes trembled at the gloomy view he was inclined to take of the distribution of the elements of happiness. But it was never of himself he thought in this way—it was always in association with his wife. All their troubles descended to the bitterly mean level of a want of money.

He scorned himself for the miserable condition of mind into which he had fallen, when all the noble aims and hopes of life disappeared, and only the craving for money seemed to possess him—only money seemed to contain the charm which would bring back joy and peace to his heart.

"God forgive me," he groaned, "but money would have saved us, and I cannot help feeling that poverty has a sharp sting. Well, I shall not try to cheat myself by hiding my head in the sand. I accept the fortune that is given to me, and in my own suffering I shall learn much that will help me to help others. Earnest work must bring peace."

A brave resolution, and his thorough sincerity in making it seemed to lighten his heart of some of the gloom which lay so heavily upon it. He would turn his face to the future, and he would refuse to look backward.

She went out and ran down to the gate, flung it open, and stopped, listening. Was that Baby crying, or was Walter coming after her? No; just the wind blustering, and the sea dashing wrathfully against the rocks. Rain was beginning to fall in big drops.

She dragged herself away from the gate, and her steps were very heavy. She suddenly started into a run, as if she were eager to escape the temptation to return. He would follow, he would overtake her and bring her back, and she would be so overwhelmed with shame. She struck into a field in order to escape him. But she halted, for there seemed to be a cry from Baby which stayed her steps, and drew her back towards the house in spite of herself.

How dark it was, and how fiercely the wind blew! Then the vague terrors which darkness always suggests to the superstitious—robbers, ghosts, and warlocks—rose before her. What might not happen to her in that weird night? Above the din of the storm there was in her heart that faint baby's cry, now low and pitiful, again sharp and shrill, dragging her steps back when she would go forward. But she was going to save Walter and his family; Dalmahoy was to be rescued from ruin, and Grace was to be made happy. So she would be very strong, and she would suffer anything for their dear sakes.

Then she would run again, looking back at intervals, and suddenly she came into collision with something. Her head

came round quickly, and she could see in the uncertain light the broad cap of a man, his coat-tails and an armless sleeve fluttering furiously in the wind. Robbery and murder were the least of the horrors which this solitary encounter suggested to her mind.

She dropped on her knees before the figure, crying excitedly—

“ I have no siller but a half-crown—I’ll give you that, and it will do you no good to murder me.”

She fumbled for her pocket to bring out the half-crown, but the man made no answer ; and she trembled, for silence is always terrible when there is much at stake.

As she held up her piece of money, a broad flash of lightning crossed the landscape, and illumined the figure—the armless sleeve, the coat-tails and rags fluttering in the wind—and she gasped with the sense of relief she felt. She was kneeling in supplication to a “ tattie doolie”—a scarecrow, an old coat and cap tied on to a stick—which she had mistaken for a man of the most villainous character.

She went on again, stumbling often, and trembling, not at the storm or darkness, but at the cry within her breast which blamed her for what she was doing. Every sough of the wind seemed to give that cry words, and they called, “ Come back, come back ! ”

But it was for their sake, and she would be brave. She would endure the pain. She would pass beyond that distant horizon-line, and lose herself in the mysterious beyond, or she would meet her father, and bring him back in time to save Dalmahoy from the auctioneer.

The night and the storm seemed to be in league against her, they interfered so much with her movements, misled her so often, and so often tried to turn her from her purpose. God help those who were at sea on such a night as this ; and God help her, for she was at sea too, without compass, almost without hope, and in greater danger even than those whose lives were entrusted to the wind and waves.

She hurried along, still halting, and then running away from the temptation to turn back. She was going towards Aberdeen as she hoped, where there was a possibility of learning something about the *Christina*. If not there, then at Peterhead. It

was an utterly vague and uncertain chase, but she hoped for something, and she did not know what. All that was clear to her was that by going away she would leave Walter free to be happy, and that her absence or loss—would it be thought a loss?—would induce Dame Wishart to help the Laird, and so help Walter. She was ready to sacrifice anything for that end—they never could know how much she was ready to suffer so that they might be happy—quite content if they would think of her sometimes kindly.

CHAPTER XL.

AFTER THE STORM.



WHITE, wet morning, and a loud sobbing wind ; the sea still rolling in high long waves, but with a slower movement than during the night, as if its fury was spent, and these were only the fitful upheavings of the subsiding passion. The sun shot great shafts of fire through the mist, dividing it into white streams, which slowly lifted from sea and shore, revealing the flashing waves, and rocks and trees and grass glittering with watery diamonds.

The wind penetrated the marrow of the bones with a chill, damp feeling. So Walter found when he stepped out of the house, and he buttoned up to the neck his black coat, which he had not changed since yesterday's visits to the parishioners. His face haggard and pale, his hand clutching a staff with nervous firmness. He found it necessary to grasp something, in order to help him to endure the pain and vexation caused by the discovery he had made.

Baby crying without any attempt being made to soothe him, Walter hurried upstairs, his heart beating fast with fears to which he dared not give shape. He found that Teenie had not been in bed that night. Her hat and cloak gone ; that was a relief ; she had doubtless gone down to the Norlan' Head, to spend the night with Ailie. He felt pained that she had done this, which would create such a scandal in the district ; and vexed that she could have left Baby without any one to mind him. (He did not think that she had expected him to seek her long before this hour.)

But it was an intense relief to know where she was. He summoned the girl, Lizzie, to attend to Baby ; then he put on his hat, took staff in hand, and set out with the intention of giving Teenie a good scolding for her ridiculous conduct. He never doubted that in her fit of passion, just to annoy him, she had gone off to her father's house, and he would find her there.

He had hoped to meet her in the morning in a calmer mood, and ready to listen to kindly counsel and loving words ; perhaps the violence of her action might render her the more willing to listen.

He knew nothing yet of the poor girl's wild scheme, or of the devotion and love which had driven her to sacrifice everything—child, home, name—for his sake !

He had only proceeded a little way down the road when he encountered Habbie Gowk, leading Beattie instead of bestriding him, and leaning heavily on his staff. Man and donkey looked more and more haggard and weary than the last time they had been seen.

"It's that fortune," growled Habbie, looking wistfully at his faithful companion ; "even the brute beast kens what a vexation of spirit it is, and is just dwining awa' like myself. But I'll pay that writer Currie out yet if he doesna get it for me !"

So, in pity for Beattie, he walked instead of riding. As soon as he saw Walter, he saluted him—

"Good morning, minister ; I'm real glad to see you out already. I suppose you're going down to help the folk ; they're in sare trouble, and I was just coming up to tell you. It's been a wild night, and a heap o' the boats were out ? twa o' them have come hame keel upmaist and a' bashed. Red Sandy's wae's aye o' them, and there's a wife with four bairns to sing wae's me for him. The salmon-stakes have been broken down, and there is nae saying what harm has been done. There's mony folk will feel the losses of last night as long's they live."

Walter felt that he was one of them, for he had lost the peace of his home. He glanced down towards Rowanden, and as the mist lifted from the shore, he saw women and bairns, old men, and a few of the younger ones who had been by some fortunate circumstances restrained from venturing out to sea during the night, moving about excitedly on the rocks and sands.

He understood what it meant, and he did not hesitate a moment ; his own business must wait ; his duty was to be down there amongst the afflicted people, striving to help them by words and acts, to save all who could be saved, and to comfort those who were mourning.

"Thank you, Habbie," he said. And he went off with long

rapid strides, which soon left the poet and Beattie far behind him.

The boom of the sea rolled over the people as they rushed about in wild confusion, beating their hands against the air, striving to do something that might help those whom they loved, and yet bitterly conscious of their powerlessness. The cold green waves lashed the shore, and their retiring murmur seemed to mock the cries of pain of which they were the cause.

"Oh, minister ! can you no help us ?" cried Buckie Willie's wife, rushing up to him with dishevelled hair ; " my man's out, and there's no sign of his boat yet. He was cankered when laid up with the rheumatics, but he was a guid man for a' that ; and there's our bairns and his mither to fend for. Will not the Lord help us ? "

" We must hope for the best and do our best," was the grave answer ; " very likely your man has been obliged to put in at some other port, and you'll have news of him during the day."

" Maybe that's it, minister, I'll no doubt your word ; but it's cauld and eerie waiting for the news." And the woman shuddered as she drew her children round her, the little ones staring in wonder at their mother's anguish, the eldest rushing about the beach, gathering scraps of wreck which were cast up by the water. Maybe the boy played with a bit of his dead father's tackle.

" It's been terrible work yon, sir," said Tak'-it-easy Davie, who with his usual luck had spent the night comfortably in bed ; he nodded towards the sea as he spoke. " I'se warrant it'll take two or three thousand to replace the tackle that's been lost, to say nothing o' the lives and the fish. There's a heap o' fine salmon lying up there, but a' bashed and useless. It's been a bad night for fish and folk."

Walter assented to that practical view of matters, and passed on to a group standing near the edge of the water. There were several old men, a number of women, and, behind, white-headed half-dressed bairns, striving to get a glimpse of the something the elders were all bending over.

It was Red Sandy, who had been washed ashore, much cut by the rocks, and one of the men was covering the body with an old sail.

" We've done our best, sir," said Mysie Keith, as Walter ap-

proached and way was made for him (as usual, she had been first on the scene of trouble, and was supporting the head of the man); "but it's a' by, and there's no help for him in this world. Speak to his wife."

Mysie drew the sail over the face, and bade the men carry him up to his house.

She moved quietly away, to see where help might be most needed next.

The wife was standing dull and stupified, looking on; two children clinging in terror to her skirts; two others standing a little way off, pressing their knuckles into their eyes, crying, they did not know why, and wondering why "father" was lying there so quiet with all the folk gathered about him.

Walter took the woman by the arm, and gently led her away from the place as the men prepared to lift the body.

"You have a heavy sorrow to bear," said Walter; "but God will help you."

"He would need," muttered the woman, somewhat dourly; "there are four bairns to feed."

It was one of Walter's principles never to attempt to deny the apparently unmerited hardships with which people were often afflicted. He could not use the conventional phrases of consolation. He said outright, "Yes, it is bad—it is terrible, and the cries of agony are natural and necessary. But only have faith, and resignation will soon come. You must suffer, and you must cry; that is a relief. Have faith, and by-and-by you will find happiness; the suffering only endures a little while."

So he did not tell her that she must not grieve, but that she must try to get over her grief as quickly as possible for the sake of her bairns. Since it was His will to leave her their only guardian, she must endeavour to do her duty faithfully.

There was a simple earnestness in his manner, a sympathy in his low voice, which reached the woman's heart, and she was comforted a little; she would remember his words in a few days, and find strength in them.

But he had a difficult task to perform as he moved about from one to the other where "there was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not."

Suddenly there was a loud shout of joy. Three boats were seen in the distance beating towards the haven.

The shout of joy recalled Walter to his own anxiety ; but he resolutely put it away from him ; or rather he endured the pain, and went on steadily with his work.

"That's my man !" shrieked Muckle Jean Houston, almost rushing into the water ; "I ken him by the newly-barked sail. He's safe, he's safe ! the Lord be praised !"

She had been married only a few weeks, and she was frantic with joy at his escape.

"And that's my Donald, yonder !" cried old Meg Carnoustie, whose thin white hair floated in the wind ; "that's my bairn ; I ken by the white patch in the sail ; I put it in wi' my ain hands. My bairn is safe ! oh, God be thanked !"

The young wife and the aged mother were in their happiness selfishly indifferent to the agonies of those around them. They rushed to the farthest point of land, followed by others, to be ready to give any assistance that might be in their power.

"And yon is Gleyed Tam wi' the smack rig," said Peg Johnstone quietly, but with sufficient interest to warrant the suspicion that she felt a great deal more pleasure than she chose to display.

The boats tacked to windward of the Wrecker : the eyes of those who watched starting in the sockets, hands reached out, straining towards the men in eagerness to help. The water rushed up to the knees of the women and men who stood in front. The interest of all was concentrated for the moment upon the three boats, and personal affliction and fears were forgotten.

A sudden silence fell upon the crowd. Muckle Jean Houston's man, Donald Carnoustie, Gleyed Tam, and their crews seemed to represent all that the folk of Rowanden had at stake, although twenty boats had gone out.

They passed the Wrecker—a long breath of relief, that was almost a groan, escaped from the crowd. They crossed the bar and ran in shore safely. The boats were seized by eager hands and dragged up the beach before one of the crews could spring out. Then all the men were surrounded by friends ; voices rose loud, joyful, and sad. The interest became again personal, and women and men shrieked out inquiries for the

loved ones who had not returned. The boats had been separated by the storm; each had made for the port which the skipper thought he had most chance of reaching; others had gone down in sight of their comrades, who were powerless to help them. All the nets and tackle of every description had been lost; but a portion of them might be recovered by the Government lugger which had put out for the fishing-ground to render assistance might be in its power. A few boats would be picked up, and possibly one or two crews who had managed to beat about and keep their crafts afloat; others would be heard of from different stations; but the losses would be heavy in any case.

Gleyed Tam, the water dripping from him and forming a pool round his feet whenever he halted, made his way to Mysie Keith.

"For God's sake, Mysie," he said hoarsely—and the ugliness of his face did not mar its expression of deep sorrow, and of humble gratitude for his own escape—"speak to Buckie Willie's wife. She's standing yonder wi' the bairns, saying never a word when the folk are clattering. Try and cheer her—she kens that I was next to me when we gaed out."

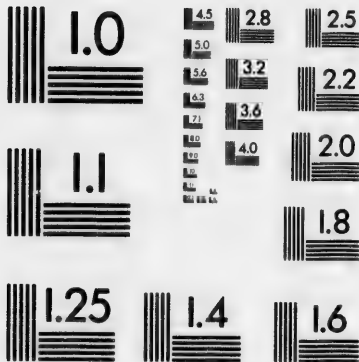
"And is he no to come hame?"

"No; his boat capsized no three yards from me. I could not do anything. I saw him in the water holding up his laddie, Jock, in his arms, and fechtin' wi' the waves to save the loon. He held him up when he was going down himself. He was making for our boat, and I watched to get hold o' him. He was gey near us too; but the laddie couldna soon like his father; and I just heard Buckie crying, 'It's God's will,' and there was a big wave, and I never saw them again. Try and cheer her, puir sowl; tell her that she'll no want as lang as I ha'e a bite to share wi' her and the bairns."

Mysie bowed her head and went over to the woman, to discharge the task for which her own suffering qualified her. She took the youngest bairn in her arms; bade the other children follow; then she seized the dumb woman by the arm and led her up to the trim cottage. The kettle was hanging over the fire—placed a link lower on the chain before she had gone out, so that it might be ready on her return from that sad quest which had no end and no comfort for herself, save that she



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could comfort others. She made tea for the widow ; and presently, without a word spoken, the woman comprehended that she had lost her husband and her eldest born.

On the beach at Rowanden there were women who had been, during the night, deprived of husband and children ; children who were now fatherless ; and old men whose mainstays in life had been taken from them.

And Walter worked earnestly amongst them ; speaking to each those homely words of comfort and hope which seem so commonplace and dull to us when we are well and happy, but are full of sympathetic meaning and consolation when we are in sorrow. All his own troubles were forgotten, and when remembered they seemed to be insignificant in view of the despair which he encountered here amongst his parishioners. So he worked, devotedly and lovingly, and many hearts were lightened, many vicious thoughts corrected by his words and acts of simple kindness. Some who would have been ready to "curse God and die," were softened and helped to bear their burden.

Ailie came down from the Norlan' Head to see what was going on, and to do what she could for the sufferers. Walter saw her, and the storm in his home came back to him. He could not restrain himself—he ran towards her with the breathless question—

"Did Teenie send you for me?"

"Teenie—I have not seen her since yesterday forenoon!"

"Not seen her?—was she not with you last night?"

"Wi' me?—no ; what gars you spier such a ridiculous question. She was at hame."

He stood dumbstricken, his hands clenched, bewildered and stupified.

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CHAPTER XLI.

GONE AWAY.

ALL the vague fears which had disturbed him during the night were suddenly reflected upon his mind. He heard the sob of the wind, he looked with dazed eyes on the confused movements of the fisher-folk ; he turned to the heaving sea, and a thought which terrified him—which he tried to beat out of his brain—took possession of him. Was he to take his place amongst these mourners, not as their guide and comforter, but as their fellow-sufferer ? Had the cruel sea robbed him also of his treasure ?

Impossible—she could not be so mad, so wicked as to venture upon the sea last night. Then he remembered her craving to know what lay beyond the horizon-line of her life, her passionate nature, and her indifference to the perils of the sea. If she could only have witnessed such a spectacle as he had seen that morning !

He did not know how her nature had changed since the birth of Baby ; he still thought her capable of any wild act which might present itself to her fancy. He remembered, however, that there was no boat in the Witch's Bay now since the adventure of Teenie and Grace, and so he had one fear the less. She might have obtained a boat elsewhere, but that was not at all likely.

Then he was confronted by the enigma : What had she done ? Whither had she gone ? To Dalmahoy ? To Craighburn ?

No, she would not go to either of these places in the humour she was in last night ; and there was no other place to which there was the least probability of her going.

He thought, with bitter remorse, of the many trifling acts of neglect of which he had been guilty towards her ; he magnified them into cruelties of the first importance. He thought of how often he might have given her pleasure when he had turned

from her, complaining that she took no interest in his labours, and how important it was that all his thought and time should be concentrated upon the duties he had undertaken. He wished the old time back, that he might be more loving and less exacting. Ah, how kind he would be! how merciful to all her sins! how proud of all her pretty ways, and how blind to all her faults!

He thought of these things when it was too late; he condemned himself utterly and without pity.

"God help us, Ailie; I fear we too have had a wreck last night."

"What's wrang—and what gar'd you ask about Teenie, when you maun have been wi' her a' night!"

"No—we quarrelled—I stayed in my room. She did not go to bed. I thought she was with you."

"God be here!" exclaimed Ailie, in terror; "no wi' you, and no wi' me!—then she's drowned!"

He felt sick as he listened to this echo of his own first thought. Both had remembered her mermaid-like ways, and leapt to the conclusion that the worst had happened. The idea never occurred to them that she could have adopted the commonplace method of travelling—on her feet. As usual in matters of mystery, the wildest possible explanations obtained the first attention, whilst the real explanation was quite simple.

His head bowed, brows knit, cheeks white, and his hands clutching the staff which he held across his body—as if holding himself in, trying by physical means to restrain himself from any violent outburst of passion or grief—he stood gazing at the sand; deaf now to all the din of wind and waves, of voices in sorrow or joy, and blind to the grandeur of the scene around him. The sun had at last overcome the mist and burst in a broad golden glare upon sea and rocks, which sparkled and gleamed with many brilliant colours, as if the jocund morning were ready to make amends for the dismal shadows of the night.

Ailie was an active, bustling old wife, indeed she was apt to bustle too much, and to make everybody uncomfortable by her restless endeavours to keep everybody right. So she quickly recovered from her astonishment.

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just been making fun of you, as she used to do with me. Often she would go away for a whole day without saying a word, and for no other end than to have a laugh at me. She'll be hode somewhere about the house. I'll go see."

"Very well; I'll follow you presently."

There was something unpleasantly quiet in the way he said this; at the same time he raised his head, and the face was cold and stonelike.

Ailie was hurrying off, and he made a quick movement as if to stay her; but he let her go. His thought had been to bid her keep silent about the fears they entertained regarding Teenie; but then if she had really disappeared, the wider the fact was known the sooner she would be discovered. But his heart writhed under the sense of shame, and the prospect of the scandal, which all this involved. There was a bitter feeling growing up within him, which made his blood cold, and gave an unnatural clearness to his thoughts.

He turned to the fisher-folk—they did not suspect how entirely he shared in their sorrows; they were grateful for his kindness, but they did not feel his sympathy so warm at this moment as they had felt it a little while ago.

"Go up to the station, Davie," he said to Tak'-it-easy, "and telegraph to Aberdeen, Peterhead, Bervie, and to any of the stations they can communicate with, for early news of the missing boats. I hope we may have good news in a few hours."

Davie pledged himself to perform the task with dispatch, and to wait for the answers. He set off with what was for him a singularly swift step; but on emergency he could exert himself like other folk.

Walter next gave directions about Red Sandy and the funeral; ordered various comforts for the wife and bairns; told those who were waiting in suspense to be patient—if they could; that amendment came with bitterness out of his own suffering. But he was perfectly clear and considerate in all his instructions. He did not forget anything or anybody. The people who were not absorbed in their own afflictions or alarms, observed that he was "gey weary-like," but they supposed it was due to the exertions and anxieties of the morning. None suspected the anguish he was enduring on his own account.

When he had made all necessary arrangements for what had

happened and for what might happen, he started homeward ; his hat was pulled low over his brow, his staff struck the ground heavily as if he needed support.

Passing through the village, he heard the shouts and laughter of children—a strange contrast to the lamentations on the beach below.

Habbie Gowk was marching down the street, strumming as loudly as he could “The Campbells are Coming,” on a Jew’s harp, or “Trump,” as it is called ; Beattie followed him, and on the back of the donkey were two touzy-headed bairns (girls), of four or five years, whilst a boy of about nine held them securely in their places. A troop of children gambolled about this droll procession, shouting, and making fun of the poet and his companions. The twang of the trump was only heard at intervals above the din of the urchins. As soon as he saw Walter, Habbie took the instrument from his mouth, and saluted him.

“Bad work down yonder, minister,” he said, nodding towards the beach ; “I did not go after you, for I thought it would be ower muckle for my nerves, and I could do nothing. But it made me feel angry, the thought of it ; and what do you think I did !”

“Went home to your breakfast, perhaps, and tried to forget that there was sorrow in the world.”

“No, sir ; I could not do that, seeing what I’ve been tholing mysel’ for guid kens how long. I just gaed up to that lawyer body, Currie, and roused him out of his bed—that would be good for him—I dinna believe he has seen this side of eight o’clock for years. He was for refusing to see me, but he was mistaken on that score. I banged intil his bed-chamber, and got him in his night-gown.

“‘What do you want at this untimely hour of the night ?’ says he.

“‘Night !’ says I ; ‘it’s broad day, and I’m ashamed of a man come to your years to speak that way of the Lord’s blessed light. I want to ken when I’m to get that fortune, and I’ll have no more putting off’s about it.’

“‘How can I tell you ?’ says he ; ‘it depends upon the court : it may be next week, and it may not be for years. I’ve

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told you that often enough, and you're a fool, Habbie, to annoy me in this way.'

" 'A fool,' says I, looking at him as though it was at the far end of a fiddle, 'a fool in troth for listening to you. You've just worried the sowl out of me with your fortune; but you can take it to the deevil if you like now, for I'll have no more ado with it.'

"And with that I tramped out. It was a sore temptation to give him a walloping, for he had naething but his night-sark on; but I thought of the bailies, and I resisted temptation. Outside, the bairns were cuddling Beattie, and wanting a ride; so I put them on, and felt happier nor I've done since the day I first heard of the fortune. I would not take it now if they were to pay me for it. The thought of it has been naething but a misery to me, and now I'm beginning to feel like my old self. So we're going for a daunder.

Walter listened to all this as patiently as if he had no care of his own; never attempting to interrupt, never displaying the least irritation. When he had done—

"I have no doubt you will be a happier man, Habbie, forgetting the fortune than you could be waiting for it. If it is yours, it will perhaps come to you in time; but, at any rate, you can do without it; that is a great consolation. There are many to whom it would bring happiness: as it is, there are many to whom it has brought nothing but vexation."

"It's a' vanity, minister, and there's nae telling what a vexation of spirit it has been to me. But I'm for no more of it; I'll sell my ballants, sing my sangs, and let the deevil flee awa' with the fortune."

"Where are you going now?"

"Wherever the Lord wills and ballants may be sold; to the fairs and markets, and to see our auld friends throughout the country. The Lord be thanked we have no fortune to taigle or fash us now."

"Will you go by Dalmahoy, and say that I would like to see the Laird at once?"

"I'll go to John o' Groat's if you like—hereabout or far awa', it's a' ane to Dandy."

"Dalmahoy will be far enough to oblige me at present. And yet—yes: I would like you to go on to Craighburn and tell Miss Wishart——"

"I was going there at any rate. I want to tell Miss Grace what I've done. She's been a good friend to me."

"She has been a good friend to every one. I'll give you a note for her."

He took out his pocket-book, and wrote—

"In trouble. Come to Drumliemount if you can.—W. B."

He tore the leaf out; folded, addressed it, and handed it to Habbie.

"All right, sir; Beattie and me will be there in nae time. Am I to wait for an answer?"

"Don't trouble about that. Good-bye, Habbie, and success be with you wherever you go."

"Thank you, sir; it's rare kind of you to say the word—there are few folk ken what a lift a kind word is at whiles to a puir sowl. There's many a bonny flower that would die for want of rain, but that the drap of dew comes and saves it."

"You are a philosopher, Habbie, as well as a poet."

"God kens what I am, for I dinna. Whiles I feel myself such a good-for-nothing creature, that I think it would be best to make a hole in the water, and have done; but then what would come of Beattie? that holds me back; and syne I hear a lad or a lass litling one of my ballants, or see them loupin wi' joy to the tune of my fiddle, or maybe to the twang of this bit trump, and I say to myself, 'Cheer up, man; if you can make folk blithe for an hour or twa at a time, you're no such a worthless wretch as you thought yourself.' So I go on as before taking my dram, and seeking sunshine on the hills and in the valleys, roosting in couthie farm-houses, or singing my ballants in a bothy. I never was downright miserable till I heard tell of that confounded fortune; and I'm blithe again now that I have been and cast it overboard."

"You are fortunate in being able to cast your care overboard; some people cannot."

"So muckle the waur for them. Good-bye, sir.—Now, bairns, you must get down, and you shall have another ride and another tune when I come back."

He helped the children to the ground with much gentleness; gave one a pinch and the other a "kittle" under the arms, till they screamed with laughter then he mounted Beattie, rode off to Dalmahoy

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CHAPTER XLII.

A PROBLEM.

WALTER encountered Ailie at the gate. She had been looking for him.

"I'm in great tribulation, sir," she said; "she's no in the house anywhere, and the lass kens naething about her. Oh, what have you been doing or saying, that the poor bairn should have been driven out of her ain house in such a night as it was?"

He was not surprised by the information that Teenie could not be found; but he winced at what he knew would be the general exclamation—what had he been doing or saying to drive her away?

The blame and the indignation of the folk would fall upon him; nobody would take the trouble to investigate the real state of the case; and everybody would at once condemn him. Although he was ready enough to condemn himself, he disliked the idea of other people doing it, and regarding him as a monster. The disgrace of his position would soon tell upon him; right and left he would hear murmurs of reproach at his conduct; and he must be silent. He could not defend himself without accusing Teenie, and that he could not and would not do. He must be silent, and wait with what patience he could command for the conclusion of the adventure.

She was gone: that was clear: and he must set himself to discover in what direction she had turned.

She did not go by the sea, because there was no boat; and if she had gone by land, it would be an easy thing to overtake her; but how was it possible to discover the route she had taken? There were no relations to whom she would go; and she had left not the least trace of her course.

It was a bewildering position, but once satisfied that she had not wilfully given her life to the sea—he argued himself into that belief with dogged persistency, which indicated the tremb-

ling fears lurking behind it—he was disposed to regard her disappearance as a mere outburst of petulance, and he felt sure that she would return by-and-by.

Before Ailie he displayed no emotion except what might be seen in the white face and quivering lips. But in his heart the struggle was terrible between his passion as a mere man and his sense of duty, reverence, and submission as a minister. He was trying hard to find the true path in this darkness which had fallen upon him. His wife had done wrong, and he was angry with her ; but at the same time he felt that he, too, had failed. He was eager to discover in what, so that he might make all the atonement in his power. Still his heart felt cold and hard.

He had to write to a neighbouring clergyman, to ask him to officiate in his stead on the following day, for he thought himself quite unfitted to administer the Sacrament in his present mood. Opening his desk to take out paper, he saw the rough sketch he had made of Grace and Teenie in the garden at Craighburn, on the occasion of the first visit there with his betrothed. Then the old feeling of tender love came back to him and helped him.

Teenie's face seemed to be full of yearning and doubt ; Grace's calm, and pathetically beautiful. He remembered the happiness he had experienced when he saw that those two were friends ; and his thoughts travelled on to the day on which they had come up to inspect Drumliemount. He recalled the sweet promises they had exchanged, the bright hopes and dauntless faith which had inspired him. And now!—those bubbles were very beautiful, and their existence very brief.

" Ah, my poor lass ! " he said, his eyes fixed dreamily on the sketch ; " you cannot know how much I loved you, or you would not have left me. You cannot guess how much my life was bound up in yours, or you would have forgiven me my sins against you, and tried to help me to accomplish some little part of my ambitious dream. So you would have made me a better man, and made me love you more. But the dreams were only dreams, and the reality is this ? "

He glanced round the room, in which furniture and books lying in confusion assumed to his fancy an air of desolation. He put the sketch away tenderly, and yet as if he could not

bear the sight of it. He felt that it would do him good if his eyes would run with tears. But they were quite dry.

He looked back and saw what a little height he had gained in the great work which he had set before himself to accomplish. He looked forward and saw the hills rise, height over height, until the goal was lost in the silver clouds of summer ; so utterly beyond his reach, that it seemed as if there were nothing for him to do but look upward yearning, and die.

But this was the wicked prompting of despair—it was weak and contemptible. There was something better to do than yield to this weakness ; he was bound to accept humbly and bravely the fate which was given to him, and strive earnestly to do what was right and best under the circumstances, no matter what pain it cost him. He would try to do that.

He examined the bed-room : she had not taken any extra clothes with her. He looked into a drawer where they kept small sums of money ; she had not apparently taken any with her. Then she had not gone far, and she must travel on foot, or borrow a vehicle from some one who knew them.

In that case they would soon trace her.

He tried to fancy in what position she had been standing in the room ; then how she had descended to the ground floor. He followed the steps, and suddenly he remembered that low sob at his door. His pulse quickened to pain in the bitterness of chagrin that he had not sprung up and saved her. What fiend of evil humour had kept him in his seat at that moment ? The sob echoed in his brain ; he saw her with hands stretched towards him, pleading for pity and forgiveness ; he had been silent, and she faded away into the mist.

"That is the true irony of fate—when it is busiest we are blindest," he muttered ; "God knows what mad act she may have been tempted to perpetrate, thinking my heart was changed towards her."

The cold sense of undefined fear again extinguished all angry thoughts regarding her.

At the door he encountered the Laird, who had been for the last five minutes listening to Ailie's description of the calamity which had befallen them.

The Laird was neat and spruce as usual, but the crows'-feet were more distinctly marked than they had been a few months

ago, and any one seeing him now would have been able to make a nearer guess at his actual age.

"So," he said, his hands clasped behind him on the knob of his riding-whip, which he swung between his legs as he spoke, "So, the honey is all eaten, and there's only the bitter wax left in the hive. This is an admirable comment upon your grand contempt for my worldly and selfish counsels—as you called them."

"You counselled wisely, father, according to your view of things; I tried to act honestly, according to mine. I have not repented—Teenie was a good wife."

"Who the devil said she wasn't? I think she was a splendid lass, and she would have made any man's home bright and pleasant, if he only gave her a fair chance. You cannot have done that."

"I tried."

"But trying is not enough—we must do. I am vexed about this squabble; I like Teenie—why, her pretty ways almost persuaded me that it was worth while losing an old family home in order to learn what real affection was; and she showed it to me, whom she had no reason to value much. What have you been doing to drive her away?"

"I cannot tell—I do not even know how the quarrel began; but there were bitter words—the fault is mine."

The Laird looked at him curiously, and observed the restraint he placed upon himself, and the anguish he was suffering.

Then holding out his hand—

"Wattie, my lad, you're down: I won't strike. I'm glad you are so ready to take the blame to yourself. That's right; and now we'll find the runaway, and give her a sound rating for frightening us all."

Walter grasped the offered hand warmly. The two men had never thoroughly sympathised with each other until that moment. They were drawn closer together than ever before, and they seemed to understand each other better.

The circumstances of the disappearance were explained.

"It is a puzzle to know where to look for her," said Dalmanoy, "but you take the horse, and make a circuit northward; I'll take the gig, and go southward. We are sure to find somebody on the road who has seen her. What was the colour of her cloak?"

"Dark grey."

"That's not very distinguishing. Do you know what she had on her head?"

"A Leghorn hat, I believe, with a blue ribbon."

"That's 'etter. Now off you go—we'll soon find her. She must take the road somewhere, and there are only about a dozen roads for her to choose from. I'll get a gig at the inn, instead of going back to Dalmahoy; and, I say, you'd better tell the women-folk here to hold their tongues, for the fewer who know of this business, the more comfortable it will be for Teenie when she comes back."

Walter saw the force of that suggestion; indeed, one of the many disturbing thoughts roused by this escapade of Teenie, was that of the scandal which would spread throughout the county. "The minister's wife ran awa'!—aye, sirs, but it's a queer world."

He dreaded hearing that exclamation, although at first, in his anxiety to find her, he had been disposed to brave it. But now, for her sake, he saw that it was best to keep the adventure as quiet as possible.

He arranged with Ailie to take the letter to the clergyman whose friendly help he had asked for the following day; and he left a note for Grace, in the event of her calling during his absence.

Then he set out upon his sad journey. He took the old coach-road first, and the fleet foot of the horse was very slow to his eager spirit. He reached over the neck of the animal, as if that would bring him the sooner to his object.

He drew up beside a stonebreaker, who was busy at work in a hollow by the roadside.

"Were you out early this morning, my man?"

The man dropped his long-shafted hammer, and took off his goggles to have a good look at his questioner, whom he recognised, for it was only about ten miles from Rowanden.

"Aye, I was out at six."

"Many folk passed this way?"

"Oo, aye, plenty folk; there was Brunton's cattleman; and there was a drove o' sheep, with the shepherd and twa dogs; and now there's yoursel'."

"You did not see any—women-folk?"

"Never a petticoat, and there's no ane like to pass without me seeing it. But there was twa strapping queans passed yesterday wi' their kists in a cart, flitting from Broomieknowe."

"Thank you."

"Oo, you're walcome."

He passed on, up to farmer Brunton's, where his inquiries met with the same result. Then he cut across country, pursued his search in a number of surrounding villages, visited strange farmhouses, and inquired at the cots of the labourers. Occasionally he found a woman at home in the cottages, who, after the first shyness and doubt as to the object of the inquirer, became loquacious enough about everything that had happened during the past fortnight—how the "clocking" hen had brought forth thirteen ducks, and was "rale proud o' the clecking;" how the sow's litter was likely to do weel; and how the cow had calved in the middle of the night, and nearly died. But generally he found in the cots only the bairns, whose parents were out at work, whilst the household was left under the charge of a chubby matron of eight or ten years.

The result was the same in every instance: he obtained not the least hint about Teenie.

The day passed into gloaming, gloaming into night, and still he was apparently as far as ever from the object of his quest.

There was a curious stillness in the atmosphere, as if portending another storm. The occasional chirp of birds, the call of a man to his horses as he led them home, or a brief snatch of a milkmaid's song, mellowed and endowed with peculiar charm by place and time, were the only sounds which broke upon the quietude of the evening. There was a melancholy feeling inspired in him by this awful stillness of nature. As the shadows darkened upon them, the mighty mountains impressed him with a sense of eerie solitude and grandeur. The white mist creeping slowly over all, enshrouding hills, trees, and houses, filled him with sad thoughts. But it was the strange stillness which affected him most; it formed such a bitter contrast to the storm raging within his breast.

He had worn out the horse, and he was obliged to turn homeward, sick at heart, fagged out, and trembling at the rapid growth of his fears for Teenie's safety.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

SEEKING.

IT was midnight when he reached Drumliemount. The Laird was waiting for him. Each read in the other's face the answer to the question which remained unspoken on their lips—no success.

"I doubt we'll have to let it be known," said the Laird, with some irritation, in spite of his habitually philosophic (or selfish?) temperament; it was hard just at that moment to have an addition to the family troubles; and he could have delivered an excellent oration just then upon the value of submission to the experience of parents, but he refrained. "One advantage of making it known is that we shall be able to get information from all quarters, and also to make a thorough search of the district."

"It does not matter now who knows it."

"From what Ailie says, it is possible that she is hiding in some cottage in the neighbourhood, and laughing at us all this time" (the Laird did not believe that—he, too, began to have fears—but he thought there was no harm in saying it).

"Or she may be drowned," added Walter, in a low dreamy voice.

"Hoot toot! no fear of that; we'll find her in the morning. You are tired; take a rest, and you will have more spirit for the work. By the way, have you arranged about the church to-morrow?"

Walter took up a letter which was on the table. After reading it—

"No; Hutcheson cannot come until the afternoon, and there is no time to seek any one else. I must officiate myself."

"That's awkward; but the more need for you to rest. Come, Wattie" (pressing his arm with a half-shy tenderness), "let me guide you in this. Take your rest, and whilst you are doing work to-morrow, I shall be busy looking for her."

"You are very kind, father, and you punish me most in that way for the vexations I have caused you."

"Good night," said the Laird hastily ; "do as I have advised you."

He went away, feeling anxious to help his son, and feeling very much pleased with himself. He did not remember the fib he had perpetrated to Teenie ; and even if he had, he could not have understood what an important part it had played in suggesting the mad course she had adopted.

Walter was utterly distracted by the combination of anxieties which surrounded him. The most solemn duties he had to perform in the morning were so utterly at variance with the disturbed and irritated state of his mind. He felt as if it would be an unpardonable crime for him to dispense the Sacrament, whilst his heart was torn by such worldly distresses as those which now afflicted him.

He had a very high ideal of the life he ought to lead, of the work he ought to do, and at present everything seemed to oppose the aims which this ideal directed. He was conscious of two personalities—the common one, which submitted to the buffets of the world, and winced under them ; the ideal, which indicated how he should endure and rise above all the ills of life. But everything came back to the thought of Teenie.

She had done wrong. Well, his duty was to pity, to forgive, and to win her back by love. But she could not love him, or she would not have acted as she had done. She had shown herself indifferent to his severe trials—perhaps they were even the cause of her flight ; but he shrank from the meanness of that thought.

She had shown herself indifferent to the scandal which her conduct would create, and to the shame of it which must fall upon him. She had shown an almost unnatural carelessness about her child. Could he pardon this woman ?

The struggle was a fierce one, the hot passion of the man waging a great war with the high ideal of life and duty, by the light of which he had been striving to guide his steps. The passion was strong ; the ideal light was pale. Passion led up its mighty battalions of wounded vanity ; the sense of the ridicule to which he would be exposed ; pride ; rage at her trifling with the sacred ties of home—all combining in a grand charge of

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indignation at the doubt and slight of his love implied by her act.

No, he could not pardon her !

But the ideal and better self appeared, like a shadow in the mist, and reminded him of the sweet thoughts she had inspired, of the happiness of which she had been the source, of the tenderness she had shown him ; of the soft touch of her hand, the dear yearning lights of her eyes ; and his own eyes became dim, his heart swelled and throbbed.

The battle was over. He rose up strong and brave, answering the problem he had to solve.

" Yes, thank God, I can pity—I can forgive her. I *will* believe that she has reasons for this conduct unknown to me. I will trust her, no matter how bad she may seem to be. . . . My poor wife, I will seek you and try to help you, not because it is my duty, but because I love you."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE DAY OF REST.

A PALE blue cloudless sky, the sea bright green, restless as usual, but not noisy or fierce ; a little cold, although flashing under brilliant sunlight ; yet wearing a mild and winning look to those who were perspiring in the heat of the day.

A soft warm wind, which only at long intervals rustled the leaves of the trees ; the warm drowsy hum of bees ; the atmosphere quite clear, and presenting sharp outlines of distant objects. The roads like yellow ribbons fluttering in the wind, wavering downward and upward from far-away points, and concentrating at the foot of the hill on which stood the kirk. The hills, purple, brown, and black in the distance, striped with streams that glistened and moved like quicksilver in the sunlight.

A slumberous sense of peace and rest pervading all, as if Nature shared man's reverence for the Sabbath.

The people, in twos, and threes, and fours, traversed the roads leading to the kirk with leisurely and contented steps, chatting quietly over the affairs of the household and the State, including the recent storm, and the damage it had done to the fishing gear and the crops. The farmers who lived at a distance drove in gigs at an easy trot ; but some who were late came across the moor at a helter-skelter gallop.

At a quarter to eleven the kirk-bell began to ring, and the bells of Kingshaven joined heartily, if somewhat discordantly, in the chime. The Rowanden bell gave out a slow sharp twang, which would have been hideous but for the mellowing influence of the atmosphere—Bing bang, bing bang, bing bang !

That was the signal for the fisher-folk to ascend the hill. Being close at hand, they could afford to wait until the bell began to ring ; but at the first stroke they stepped out of their cottages in grave haste, and marched up the hill in a straggling

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line—those who had suffered and lost by the late storm, dark and sad ; those who had not been directly losers by “ the visitation of Providence,” blithe enough : it is so easy to bear a neighbour’s sorrow. Those whose husbands, fathers, or brothers had returned safely and unexpectedly from the distant ports in which they had found shelter, were smiling with sweet content, although conscious that there were widows and orphans near them.

There was neither disrespect nor callousness in this—only the natural law which permits personal joy to predominate over sympathy for another’s loss, and so prevents life from falling under an eternal shadow.

Most of the people entered the church at once, and took their places in the pews which had belonged to the same families for generations. But a few of the older folk lingered in the churchyard, inspecting the graves of departed loved ones, or gathered in groups to exchange family and agricultural gossip, until within a couple of minutes of the time when the bell should cease tolling.

The latter saw the minister step out from the gate of his cottage and cross the road, his black gown gently ruffled by the breeze, his hat pulled low over his brow, and his head bowed, as if he were in deep thought.

The kindly recognitions given to him were observed only at intervals, with a nervous start, and a hasty “ good day.” For the most part, he passed on, seeing nothing, and entered the church.

The bell stopped, the doors were closed ; there was a rustling of dresses, a preliminary coughing, and the people settled down into their places.

The dark-yellow-stained wood of the pews, relieved here and there by a green or crimson cushion, contrasted admirably with the sombre grey stone walls. Mottled beams of sunlight streaming in through the windows shot over the heads of the congregation, and imparted a degree of drowsy light and warmth to what would have been otherwise a cold and gloomy building.

A profound sense of the solemnity of the occasion was felt by the congregation ; but that did not prevent several members from observing these facts : first, that the minister was

pale and haggard-looking, and that his voice quavered strangely as he read the psalm ; second, that the minister's wife was not in her pew at the foot of the pulpit staircase ; and that Dalmahoy's big pew in the loft was occupied only by his two daughters, Miss Burnett and Alice.

"Is the minister's wife no weel?" was the question which men and women were asking themselves, as the leaves of their Bibles rustled in turning to the place indicated for the reading. A perfume of peppermint lozenges and "apple-ringgy" (Southron wood) pervaded the mottled sunbeams. Outside there was a hum of bees. Occasionally a bee or a butterfly fastened upon one of the windows, and afforded much interest to the boys ; in the distance there was a cock crowing with the most reprehensible forgetfulness that it was the Sabbath day.

It was in the prayer that the singularity of Walter's manner struck the people most. He began in a trembling voice that was scarcely audible. He seemed to wander, as if uncertain of what he intended to say ; but gradually the voice became louder, the enunciation clear, and the tone so full of tender sympathy that it thrilled the hearts of the listeners. Fervid passion combined with simple earnestness to give power and eloquence to his words. He cried for help to bear the ills of life with resignation ; he cried for faith to strengthen those who faltered, to teach them that God was always near, however dark the night—however fierce the storm. He implored mercy for those whose affliction might render them temporarily rebellious, that they might be taught to see in their affliction their own errors, and to trust that whatever suffering He sends, He is ready to relieve. Faith, faith, faith ! was his cry—the first condition of happiness, the first principle of true religion. He prayed that they might learn never to doubt His love, however bitter and apparently unmerited might be the misfortunes of this world.

There was a pathetic sincerity in the white face turned upward in the sunlight. It was the man's own sorrow that he was uttering—his own faltering heart that he was helping. But each listener associated the words with his or her affliction in the late storm, and found comfort in them, and strength.

He made a deep and lasting impression upon his congrega-

tion ; he had never risen to the full height of the duties of his office till sorrow gave him power.

But throughout the day he found himself again and again faltering, thinking about Teenie ; in spite of the exaltation created by the sacred work he had in hand, the mere man's nature continually asserted itself at the most unexpected moments. He was frightened by this weakness, and shuddered at the thought of his own unworthiness to discharge the solemn duties of the day. He was glad when it was over ; still more relieved when Mr. Hutcheson came up to undertake the afternoon service.

He crossed the road hastily, and entered the house without speaking a word to any one. Wearily he threw aside his gown, feeling that he ought never to wear it again. He sat down, trying to think out quietly and methodically what he was to do next, and in which direction he was to seek her. The remembrance of the day filled him with pain ; he had gone through the most important service of the Church in a bad and unholy spirit, his mind occupied all the time with worldly anxieties. He could only pray to be pardoned whatever sin he had committed in striving to fulfil his task. He found it very difficult to walk straight.

Meanwhile there were friendly inquiries at the door, all loud in praise of the minister's eloquence (at the moment when he esteemed himself most incapable !) and anxious to learn what was the matter with Mrs. Burnett.

Poor Ailie, bewildered between her distress about Teenie and her desire to keep her disappearance quiet, betrayed every thing ; but in such a confused manner that the inquirers went away, puzzled and in consternation, to spread the most exaggerated rumours of the calamity which had occurred in the minister's household.

The news soon went round : " the minister's wife had run away, nobody knew where to," and that was why he was looking so poorly in the church. Assuredly, had she been within a circle of five miles of Rowanden, Teenie would have been speedily discovered. It was the one subject of conversation uppermost that day, and even prevailed over the events of the storm.

CHAPTER XLV.

"IT WAS MY FAULT."

GRACE came at last. He knew who it was the moment she touched the door. He sprang up to meet her, but she was beside him before he could make a couple of steps; the delicate hand was resting on his arm, the sweet sad face turned up to his, the clear earnest eyes eloquent with sympathy and inspiring hope.

"Thank you, Grace," he said, taking her hand quietly; "it does me good to see you, just as much now as in the old days when you were my protector in every danger. You are very brave and generous—but brave people are always generous. I thought of you first as soon as I discovered what had happened here. I wished much to see you yesterday."

"I was here twice, but you had not returned," she answered in her low, quiet voice; "you did not learn anything about her?"

"Nothing. I am haunted by the fear that she may have ventured upon the sea. I say to myself it is nonsense—that she had no boat, and that even if there had been one, she would not have used it on such a night. But the fear comes back to me, and tortures me."

"Why did she go away?"

"I cannot even guess her motive. I said very little to her; she was angry about something, and I left her, expecting that she would sleep and forget. I must have done something or said something that she could neither forget nor forgive."

He walked across the room agitatedly, feeling that movement of some kind was necessary.

Grace stood looking at the window, eyes open, and apparently trying to catch some slippery idea that was eluding her efforts as the bright-winged butterfly eludes a boy, and is farthest from him just when he thinks it is safe under his cap.

"I must have done something," Walter went on, "to pain

her terribly. It is always those we love who pain us most." "Yes, Grace knew that.) "And she did give me all her heart. I have been too gloomy for her bright nature—I have been dreaming too much, and have accomplished too little. I chose a profession in which it seemed possible to reconcile quiet thought with the full discharge of duty. Wrong in that—men must act rather than think, to do any practical good in the world. Wrong in that, wrong in everything; it is a little bitter, is it not, to have to acknowledge that one's whole life is a failure?"

"Walter!"

That little cry of affectionate surprise pulled him up more sharply than a volume of argument would have done.

"Forgive me; I never could speak of these things to any one but you, and it is an intense relief to be able to let out the gathering of painful thoughts into the ear of one of whose sympathy we feel sure. I have tried very hard, Grace, to do what seemed to be right, and the result appears to be failure in every direction."

"Time is on your side, and a brave heart will overcome everything."

"That is one of the platitudes with which I have been trying to console myself, but it has much more meaning when you repeat it than when I say it to myself."

Grace caught the butterfly, and she took Walter's arm.

"We'll go out to the garden."

They went out, and arm-in-arm, pacing up and down the path between the gooseberry bushes and the strawberry beds, she spoke—

"I have a suspicion of what put Teenie out of humour, and why she has gone away."

"What?"

"It was my fault."

"Yours?"

"Yes;" and at this point Grace stopped, feeling awkward and unhappy, because she had to speak of her mother.

"Well, how was it your fault?" he asked, after waiting for her to speak.

She faced the position with a calm, brave voice.

"I told her that my mother had again refused to save Dal-

mahoy. Teenie has gone away in the hope that her absence would make mother change her mind."

That was a revelation to him ; he saw and understood all—the scene with Dame Wishart, Teenie's passionate, sensitive nature, her anguish in the belief that she had been the cause of the loss of Dalmahoy, and her brave attempt to save it by sacrificing herself. His grief was the more poignant, although he did not know that other element which influenced her action—the belief, or half-belief (for it was only when angry that she really believed), that he had expected to obtain a large portion of the Methven fortune when he married her.

"Heaven sent you to be a comforter of the sorrowing, Grace," he said warmly ; "you have made me glad, for you have relieved me of a heavy burden of doubt. I thought she went away because she did not care for me ; you have shown me how true her love is—God bless you, Grace."

She needed a blessing as much as she deserved it ; it was because her own love was so pure and great, that she was able to divine Teenie's motive. The same motive would have instigated her to the same action under similar circumstances, although her calmer judgment would have shown her the foolishness of attempting to set matters right in that way.

Keenly as she felt the bitterness of her own fate at times, she was rarely unjust to Teenie, and always liked her. As for Walter, even his apparent blindness to the acuteness of her suffering did not make her angry with him. She only wished that she could learn to like him less, and that the touch of his hand, the least tender look or word from him, would not thrill her with such painful joy.

"You will be happier than ever when this is over, and she will be more contented."

"I shall try to believe that ; but the first thing is to find her. I am waiting for a message from my father ; as soon as it arrives, I start again to seek her."

"And you will let me know ?"

"I shall go round by Craigburn before coming home, if alone ; if she is with me, I shall send to you."

They walked towards the house and Grace went in, to see that Baby was properly cared for, just as the Dalmahoy ladies

came sailing along the path in their newly-turned silks covered with white muslin.

Miss Burnett carried her parasol before her as if she were making a charge at something, resolved to impale it; Alice fluttered hers about as if the force of habit were too much for her, and she was obliged to coquette even with the sunshine.

Having almost run her parasol into Walter's face, Miss Burnett halted and dropped the point of her weapon.

"How funny!—I did not think you were so near, Walter. It's very hot to-day. What is this dreadful news about Christina?—is it true that she has gone away without telling you?"

"It is true."

"It is quite a romance," murmured Alice.

"I call it a disgrace," said Miss Burnett severely, and the "giddy young thing" stood corrected, fluttering her parasol from one shoulder to the other, and fanning herself with a delicately perfumed lace handkerchief. "It would not matter if she was the only person concerned; but the whole family suffers by it, and it is extremely wicked of her. But what could we expect? I would never run away from my home."

And the consciousness of virtue added several inches to her stature.

"I would if I got the chance, but not alone," tittered Alice, who was again reprimanded.

This was irritating enough to him, but he spoke quietly.

"Will you grant me a favour, Helen?"

"Certainly, if it is reasonable."

"I only wish to ask you to say nothing about Teenie until she comes home."

"Oh we have no desire to mention the subject; but it is natural that we should be anxious about a matter which puts us all to shame. Of course, if you decline our sympathy, there is nothing more to be said. The man is waiting so we shall go home at once."

Tossing her head, and sniffing the air as if to detect the contamination that must be in it, she went off to the carriage which was at the gate. Alice, as she was about to follow, just touched his arm, and whispered—

"Poor Wattie—I am sorry for you, and for Teenie too. I loved her very much."

He walked with her to the gate, and was there in time to assist Miss Burnett to her place. She was not at all reconciled to him when the carriage drove away.

He was about to go into the house, when another interruption occurred.

Mr. Pettigrew, as behoved an elder of the Kirk, was amongst the first to catch the whispers of scandal concerning the minister's household; and feeling a solemn duty incumbent upon him to admonish the minister or to sympathise with him, as might be advisable, and feeling it to be an equally important duty to be the first to discover the details of this romance (why should anything sad or bad be called a romance?) took the first opportunity of speaking to Walter.

After much clearing of his throat and shuffling, he made his mission known. Was it true that Mrs. Burnett had—had, in fact, eloped?

"Mr. Pettigrew," said Walter, looking him straight in the face, with his grave pale eyes, which compelled the man to study the geological character of the gravel, "my wife has chosen to go from home for a time. She did not think it was necessary to send the bellman round the town to advertise her intention. Do you think it was?"

"Oh, not at all, sir—not at all, that being the case."

Walter, who did not choose to explain further, said "Good day," and retired.

Mr. Pettigrew had an uncomfortable suspicion that the minister had been telling him a "lee;" but he had not liked to say so. Somehow he never could get on with this young man as he wished; he never could tell him the truth—if the truths happened to be always unpleasant, that was not his fault—as he felt he ought to do, and as his position as a merchant and an elder entitled—indeed, called upon him to do. But he made up for his reticence here by speaking his mind with all necessary embellishments when he stood once more on his own doorstep, and felt himself master of the situation.

Walter saw in these incidents the indication of the petty annoyances to which he would be subject for many days to come, and he felt keenly ashamed of being an object for scandalmongers to work their stupid will upon. His natural inclination was to turn his back upon the place for ever, and so escape the vexations which were in store for him.

Grace held up Baby, who crowed merrily, kicked vigorously, and tugged his father's hair. Walter kissed the child, and, looking at him, resolved that he would not shun the place or the people. He would remain there to confront the slanderers, to shield his wife from shame, and to enforce respect for her by the honesty of his life. They would believe her innocent when they knew that he did not doubt her truth.

Message from the Laird—

"Have discovered nothing yet : telegraphed to all the stations en."

Walter took horse, and started again in search of her.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ON THE TRAMP.

THE fright which the "tattie-doolie" gave her had roused all the superstition of Teenie's nature ; there were, to her, voices in the wind, now loud and threatening, again low and wailing ; there were fearful spectres in the shadows of bush and tree and rock. The voices commanded and implored her to go back ; the spectres crossed her path, and the waving branches seemed like arms directing her backward.

She broke through all at first, and would go on ; but voices and shadows persisted, and her heart echoed the cry, "Go back, go back," for Baby's voice seemed everywhere ringing in her ears. Then she hesitated, began to tremble, and sank down upon a stone, crying. The desolation of her position overwhelmed her, making the utterly vague nature of her quest plain for the first time, and she felt as if she were a little boat that had broken away from its moorings, and was being tossed about by the sea, without any hand to help or to guide it.

Under the swift-flying black clouds, amidst those eerie shadows, listening to the loud wind, and to the deep boom of the sea—telling its grim story of wreck and death—she yearned for the child, the husband, and the sheltering home she had left behind.

She would go back, and yet she could not. She shrank and quivered with shame for what she had already done ; she feared that he would mock at her, scorn her—she feared that more than all the terrors of the night, more than the apparent hopelessness of the journey she had undertaken. She felt now that it was stupid and ridiculous to expect to find her father any sooner by leaving home than she would have done by waiting for him. But then, if she could only hide herself, Dame Wishart would relent, and that would accomplish all she wanted. At the same time she was frightened by that terrible feeling of desolation, and she started up to go home.

The petty feeling of shame restrained her again, and she turned in the opposite direction. The farther she went, the greater became her terror of returning, until she felt as if she could do anything, endure anything, rather than go home. So she went on and on, too much disturbed in mind to be conscious of physical fatigue ; but by-and-by Nature asserted itself, she tripped often, staggered sometimes, and at length would have fallen, but that she obtained the timely help of what seemed to be a brick wall.

She had instinctively kept the coast-line ; the loud voice of the sea had, perhaps, unconsciously guided her. A thick white mist shrouded surrounding objects, so that she had no idea where she was.

The dawn increased the whiteness of the mist, but scarcely helped to make objects more definite.

She groped round the wall until she came to what seemed to be a doorway. After a little hesitation she entered, groping her way along, but stumbling over loose stones. There was a dim light from above, and presently she guessed where she was—it was a deserted lime-kiln, which she had seen on several occasions when out driving with Walter. She crept into a recess, sat down leaning against the wall, and then fell asleep in utter exhaustion.

A cold, damp morning, the sun fighting its way through the mist.

She started up, alarmed, stupified, and shivering with cold ; stiff and pained in every joint. What terrible dreams she had been dreaming ! She had left home—she was hiding—the white walls streaked with a slimy green caught her eye, the cold wind penetrated her bones, and she remembered it all. She had dreamed that she was dreaming—that she was at home near Walter, near Baby, and the weary wandering on which she had embarked had appeared to be only a painful vision. Lo, that apparent vision was the reality, and the glimpse of home and loved ones was the dream.

She could not go back now—it was too late. Walter would never forgive her—she could not forgive herself.

She was cold and hungry ; the miserable cravings of the appetite drove her to seek some human habitation, when she most desired to avoid her fellow-men and women. She passed

out from the shelter of the lime-kiln, and the cold morning air seemed to bite through her. She knew that the road lay along the top of cliffs which overhung the sea, now near, and again at some little distance from the water. Occasionally she caught glimpses of waves dashing high up against the rocks, breaking in white spray, and receding like a baffled enemy from the walls of a besieged town.

By-and-by she heard the blithe voices of children, who were engaged in a game of hide-and-seek, singing in loud chorus whenever the hider was discovered—

"I see the gowk and the gowk sees me—
A-tween the berry bush and the ap-ple tree."

She hesitated a minute, but the voices of the children reassured her, and she advanced to the solitary cottage. Through an open window issued the sounds of vigorous scrubbing, and of a girl's voice singing. The air was slow, and the words melancholy, as they were generally rendered; but the singer, in this instance, to suit the activity of her movements, transformed the air into a lilt, and whenever she was scrubbing with special vigour, she hummed or mumbled, instead of uttering words. The song in this new arrangement ran somewhat in the following manner:—

"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can you bloom—um-um, um-um;
How can you chant, ye little birds,
And I sae—um, um-um, um-um?"

"Um-um, um-um—I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its—um-um—tree;
And my fause lover stole the rose,
But left—um-um, um-um—wi' me."

Teenie's shy knock at the door was not heard at first, but when she mustered courage enough to repeat it, the singer ceased, and the voice said cheerily—

"Come in, whoever you are; what are you standing chapping there for?"

She timidly crossed the threshold, and saw a stalwart young woman, with flaring red hair, on her knees beside a pail, over

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which she was at the moment wringing a cloth, whilst she looked round to see who was the visitor. It was a bright, happy face, and its surroundings matched it admirably—a bed in a recess, covered by a patch-work quilt of many colours, in which there was not a crease; a deal table, wooden chairs, and three-legged stools, all “clean as a new pin;” a variety of tins hanging above the mantelpiece, polished like mirrors; a pleasant peat fire, over which hung on its cleek the porridge-pot; the steel top of the fender rivalling the tins in polish; the hearth-stone newly whitened, the floor half washed, and everything presenting signs of cleanliness and content.

The woman’s first look at Teenie was one of great surprise; the visit of a lady at that time of the morning was very unusual, and Teenie’s clothes at once indicated that she did not belong to the peasantry. The woman got up respectfully.

“Guid morning, mem; and what’s your will?”

Teenie was put out by this display of respect, and she felt it the more awkward to present her petition.

“I am on my way to Aberdeen,” she faltered, “to try and learn something about my father, who is out whaling.”

“Guid be here! do you mean that you’re to walk a’ the way to Aberdeen?”

“Yes, and I want something to eat.”

“Ye’s ha’e that, but where do you come from?”

She hesitated, but answered truthfully—

“From Rowanden.”

“You belong to the fisher-folk then. I wouldna have thought it from your claes. Thank goodness my man’s a gardener, and I’m no fashed about storms or bad fishings. Come here and sit you down; you look wearied, poor thing, and I dare say the storm has taken some of your friends.”

The woman became more familiar, and most hospitable, as soon as she discovered that the visitor was in distress about something; and she made no intentional effort to pry into her business, although she talked a great deal. She gave Teenie a drink of milk, which was very refreshing, and some bannocks, with the advice—

“You’re no to spoil your appetite, for my man—Andra Fyfe, he’s head gardener at Knockmaddie—my man will be in to breakfast in twa or three minutes, wi’ a’ the bairns, and you’ll just sup a platel o’ porridge wi’ us.”

When she had settled Teenie comfortably in a chair by the fire, she proceeded to finish the washing of the floor, talking all the time.

"And what might your name be, miss ?—you're no married, are you ?"

"Yes ; my name is Burnett."

"Married !—aye, aye, you're a young creature to be a wife. And ha'e you any bairns, now ?"

"One."

"A laddie or a lassie ?"

"A laddie."

"Aye, aye, wha would ha'e thought it, and you that young-looking ! But I have six mysel'—two loons and four lassies. I was just eighteen when I was married."

"You seem to be very happy."

"Oo, aye, happy enough. I just try to keep the bairns and the house tidy, and take things as they come. It's the Lord's will, you ken, whatever happens, and skirling never saved a sow from the flesher. Andra's unco particular ; but he's a guid sowl, though whiles he's ower guid at lifting his wee finger" (a euphemism for saying that he drank too much), "and then there's nae doing wi' him."

So Mrs. Fyfe ran on, her excessive energy finding vent in gossip or song, just as happened. She finished the floor, emptied her pail in the neighbouring "midden," wrung out her "clouts," and then arranged the table for breakfast : a row of yellow bowls, eight in number, with one more for the stranger. Then she took a basin full of meal, which she took up in handfuls, and allowed it to trickle into the water, that she stirred continuously with the wooden "spurtle," or porridge-stick. When the meal was sufficiently boiled, she lifted the pot from the fire, and deftly poured out the porridge into the bowls, proportioning the contents of each to the age of the children.

The husband arrived. He was a dour sort of man. He expressed no surprise at the presence of Teenie, but his furtive glances indicated his curiosity about her. Having learned that she was on her way to Aberdeen, and wanted a rest and something to eat, he said she was welcome. Then the bairns were called in, and ranged round the table. The man pronounced a

long and earnestly-spoken grace, milk was served round, and all with good appetite supped the porridge.

Teenie was much benefited by the warmth of the house and the food, so that after breakfast she was quite ready to resume her journey. The peace and content of this home made her think bitterly that she had neglected something in the management of her household. But she could not redeem the past.

CHAPTER XLVII.

IN DREAMLAND.

OUR Andra Fyfe, when he learned the destination of his guest, remembered that there was a cart going a few miles on her way, and, if she liked, he would arrange with the driver to give her a "hurl." She was grateful for this assistance, and also for the comfort and strength which she felt after the rest in the cottage, and her substantial though simple breakfast.

She shyly offered her half-crown in payment, but it was declined kindly.

"You'll need it all," said Mrs. Fyfe, flinging back her red hair, and restraining the obstreperous efforts of the youngest born to spring to the neck of the guest; "keep your siller, and God speed you on your errand."

Teenie lifted the child in her arms—a merry-eyed, white-headed little lass of three years—and kissed her.

"'Ou was geetin'—what for?" said the child, with sudden gravity.

The mother had observed that fact also, but had said nothing; and now she endeavoured to interrupt the child. Teenie answered, lowering her face as if to hide it—

"I am not well."

"Eh, and 'ou's had to take salts and sinny!" (a remedy for every disease with the cotters, and the little one's chief idea of torment). "Me geet when mither gi'es it to me, and whiles mither skelps Bessie and whiles gi'es me a bawbee. Did 'ou get skelps?"

"Something as bad," said Teenie, smiling faintly, and thinking how much harder to bear was a mental skelping than a physical one.

"And 'ou that big!—wish me was big as 'ou."

"And I wish that I was like you."

Bessie opened her eyes wide, and tried to turn back the

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eyelids, to express her amazement at that incomprehensible reply.

"Set her down," cried the mother, with a sort of proud deprecation; "she's just a torment wi' her clatter. I dinna ken who she takes the tongue from—it's no from my man, and it canna be from me!"

Andra might have told another story, but at present he was at the door, grumbling that they would be too late for the cart. So Teenie placed the child on the floor.

"It has done me good to speak to her," she said, with distant sobs in her voice; "she minds me of my bairn—at—at home."

She found a strange difficulty in uttering the word "home," for the dreary sense of desolation came upon her again; she felt that she had no home now.

"Poor lassie!" murmured Mrs. Fyfe, her sympathy intensified by her suspicion that Teenie had not told her the precise truth about the object of her journey. "Is't the father you are going to seek?"

"No—my own father."

"Poor lassie!" repeated the good-hearted woman, thinking that matters were even worse than she at first supposed.

But Andra, hearing this, turned back.

"Are you married?" he asked gruffly.

The sad eyes looked at him with timid surprise at his sudden change of manner, and he felt abashed.

"Yes," was the simple reply.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, and stepped back to the door, satisfied when he learned that the bairn had been "honestly come by," as he used to say of such matters. He was, in his way, a stern moralist, and—although his own first child had been born before wedlock—he would not have helped Teenie at all if her answer had been different.

"Will 'ou come back again?" cried Bessie, clinging to her skirt.

"Maybe; good-bye, Bessie, and I hope you will have a long, happy life. I'm obliged to you, Mistress Fyfe—thanks to you and your man, I feel a heap better."

"Lord be wi' you wherever you gang, and you'll aye be welcome here. I hope you'll meet your father. I'm doubting

there's some sare trouble upon you ; but I'm no to fash you with ony questions. You'll come back, maybe, when you're all well again, and tell us about it."

This was spoken as they moved to the road, where Andra was impatiently waiting, and trying to preserve his temper by chewing straws.

Teenie said good-bye again to her friend in need, feeling all the time that she was not thanking her with anything like sufficient warmth, although she felt very, very grateful for the kindness she had experienced, and deeply affected by what she had seen and heard in the cottage. Mrs. Fyfe was quite content ; she was not accustomed to much effusion, even of gratitude. Three of the bairns were standing beside her—the others had started for school, five miles off—and she uttered another hearty "God speed ye," as Teenie walked away with Andra.

He strode through a field as a short cut to the high road, where they were to meet the ca. . . Whatever might be the reason of it, Andra was not nearly so dour in manner now that he was away from his own house—indeed, amongst his cronies he could be merry enough. Although he did not attempt any conversation, he showed her certain trivial attentions—such as helping her over a ditch, or through a hedge—which she would never have expected from him. Men are so different when beyond the reach of the "guidwife's" controlling and subduing eye !

"We're just in time," said he as they stepped into the road ; "yonder's Sandy Crab coming. He's a blithe loon, but there's nae ill in him, so you needna be skeared at anything he says."

Sandy Crab drove leisurely over the long straight road, sitting on the front of his cart, cracking his whip—not to quicken the horse, but to amuse himself—alternately singing and whistling "When the kye come hame." He was a fair-haired youth, with a round red face, in which there was much simplicity and good-nature. But Sandy was, according to his own account, "a de'il among the lasses," and he was proud of the many conquests he had made, proofs of which existed in the shape of locks of hair, photographs, crumpled bows of ribbon, and a garter ! The latter he had picked off the barn

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floor on the night of a kirk (harvest-home), where the dancing had been fast and furious ; and the fun he made seeking the owner won him several hearts, as he said. He certainly obtained several photographs before the next term, although every lass in the place disclaimed the ownership of the mysterious garter.

He wore a brown Balmoral bonnet, jauntily set on the side of his head ; a double-breasted jacket, the back and sleeves of which were of a thick woollen stuff, the breast of dark brown moleskin, ornamented with rows of big white pearl buttons, and a medal he had won at the athletic sports for throwing the hammer ; trousers of moleskin. He was a broad-shouldered, smart-looking fellow.

"Hey, Sandy !" shouted Andra, as the man approached ; "will you gi'e this lass a lift as far as you're going on the road to Aberdeen ?"

"That will I, my dawtie," was the answer as the cart stopped ; "loup in, my lass. 'Come under my plaidie, and sit down beside me, believe me——'"

He did not continue the quotation, for he caught sight of Teenie's pale and somewhat frightened face ; and he knew by her dress that she was not, as he had at first thought, simply a country lass flitting from one place of service to another. Many a blithe day he had enjoyed in the course of such flittings ; but this was not to be one of them. Besides, she had no kist.

He jumped to the ground, took off the back of the cart, and made a sort of gangway of it, by which she could ascend, with assistance, and take her place on the bundle of hay which he arranged as a seat.

"Will you get in ?" he said, sheepishly enough.

She hesitated a minute, and then advanced frankly. The two men, one on each side, helped her into the cart ; she sat down on the hay. Sandy fastened on the back, and jumped up on the front board again.

"Good day, mem, and a pleasant journey," said Andra quite kindly ; "I'll be glad to see you if you come our way again."

"You're awfully good, Mr. Fyfe ; I wish I could thank you as I would like to do," she said in a low quivering voice ; for the kindness of those strangers, and her own utter inability to

make any fitting acknowledgement for it, impressed her deeply. All the world had seemed so cruel to her a few hours ago.

"Say no a word about it," answered Andra.

He nodded, and turned away to his work as Sandy cracked his whip, and the horse started forward with long heavy steps, the cart jolting over stones and through ruts made by the rains.

She sat with cloak drawn tightly about her, head bowed, but occasionally glancing round in a vain effort to identify the part of the country through which she was travelling.

Sandy hummed or whistled to himself in an undertone, stealing many sheepish glances at the lady—for a lady she was, he had no doubt; and he wondered much how she came to be a friend of Andra Fyfe, and why she was travelling by road to Aberdeen, when there was the train to take her in a very short time. At length—

"Are you cozy?"

"Quite, thank you."

The voice was a very sweet one, and the manner friendly; yet all Sandy's arts failed him, and he felt unable to continue the conversation. He had a series of jokes, which were always successful with the lasses; but this one seemed so sad that the jokes were damped. He went on cracking his whip—doing even that quietly—humming, whistling and wondering.

She was thinking of the happy home she had seen that morning; how blissful was the lot of Mrs. Fyfe! how blithe the bairns! She could have been happy too, in a humble cot like that, where there were no worries about money—no bitterness of disappointment about great fortunes, and where the round of duties consisted in keeping the house and bairns tidy, making the porridge and kail, and having a pleasant smile for the guidman when he came home from his work.

They were content—aye, there was the secret of it all; and she had marred the happiness of her home, because she had not been content. Her heart swelled and throbbed as she realized how foolish, wicked, and wrong she had been in leaving Drumliemount. She wished she could go back, but shrank from that. The petty feeling of shame—of pride—barred the way. She *could not* go back now; it was too late.

But it was all so strange—the journey through the night,

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the rest in the deserted lime-kiln, the friends of the new morn-
ing, the bright home, the bairns' voices, Mrs. Fyfe's queer song,
and the jolting over the road in a cart. She seemed to be
travelling in dreamland: it must be just one of those waking
dreams which had so often visited her, and in which she had
tried to see the strange lands and peoples of the ballads and
fireside legends; or tried to comprehend that vague yearning
for the something beyond her daily life, which had been part of
her nature since ever she could remember looking out in wonder
upon the moors and the restless sea. There seemed to be
always something wanting to complete her state, to perfect
her happiness.

What was it she yearned for? Was not this the expression
of a discontented spirit, restless and ever changing as the sea?
Nobody had perfect happiness on earth, yet she had been crav-
ing for it all her life, like a child crying for the moon to play
with. It could not be love she sought, for she had found that.
She felt very miserable as she began to think that selfish dis-
content was at the bottom of it all. And yet she loved him;
she was going to prove that by hiding away, by sinking utterly
into the dreamland, so that he might be happy.

Dreams, dreams, dreams! Presently Walter would speak,
or Baby would cry, and she would waken up in the dear home,
and she would be so practical and steady that they would all
be glad this wandering had been only a dream.

"What way do you no take the train to Aberdeen?"

That was a voice far away; but it reached her, and was slowly
drawing her down from the clouds to the everyday common-
places of her position.

"Are you sleeping?"

The voice was louder and much nearer.

"Oh, are you sleeping, Maggie?" sang the voice, and went
on with the rest of the verse.

She raised her head drowsily, and saw the ruddy face of Sandy
Crab, bent towards her, laughing.

"I'm wae to rouse you, for you look weary," said the rustic
beau; "but unless you mean to gang up to the hill with me, and
help to load the peats, there's nae help for't. We're near as far
on your road as I'm going. You'll never tramp to Aberdeen;
what way do you no take the train?"

The repetition of the question roused her to its significance. The train?—she had never thought of it; all her ideas had been so confused; she had only wished to get away from Drumliemount, and to move towards the granite city in the faint—almost absurd—hope that she might there learn something of the *Christina*. Her distress had been too bitter, her mind too much distracted to form any definite plans as to her movements.

"I don't know," she answered shamefacedly; "I—I did not think of it."

"Oh, that's queer; but it's your best plan."

"Where could I get the train?"

"At Steenhylve, about six miles from here; but if you take the footpath through the wood, it's not more than four and a bittock."

"What is the fare?"

"I'm no sure, but about half-a crown, I dare say."

That was just the sum of which she was possessed; she would have nothing to give to Sandy, and she would arrive in a strange city penniless. But it was best to hasten her journey, and she would not think of what was to happen when she reached the end of it.

She was still dreaming.

The cart stopped at the corner of a narrow road, which led up to the hills whither Sandy was going for peats. He dismounted, took off the back of the cart, and offered his assistance to her in descending to the ground. She just touched his shoulder, and jumped down.

"You loup like a two-year-old," he said admiringly; "by my sang, I would like to hurl you all the way to Steenhylve; but I've a long road to go yet, and I maun be hame before even. The work has to be done, you see, whether we like or no, and I'm no one of those lazy beggars that just says, Come even, come saxpence" (meaning that the day's wage is paid whether the work is done or not).

"You have given me a good lift, and I've had a fine rest, thank you," she said, "and I would not like to take you off your road. I'll easily walk to the train."

"Go down there, then, till you come to a slap" (opening) "in the hedge, syne follow the footpath through the wood, and

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across the bog, and you'll come on to the road. Syne turn to your left, and you'll come into the town. You canna go wrong in broad daylight, although many a one has lost theirsels there at night."

"I'll remember what you say; but—how am I to pay you?"
 "Hoots! I need nae pay, I was coming this gate anyway; but if you'll gi'e me something to mind me of you—a bit ribbon, or anything—I'll be rale proud."

She gave him a bow which was fastened on the breast of her dress: it seemed to her very little, and she was somewhat astonished by the request. But she took it as a simple desire for a remembrance of one to whom he had done a kindness, and she did not hesitate.

Good-bye was said—merrily on his side, as he pinned the bow beside his medal; earnestly on hers—and he drove off to the hills, quite proud of his new trophy of conquest, as he regarded it. He was an irresistible chap among the lasses according to his own belief; but, then, very little satisfied him!

She walked down the muddy road, which was pock-marked by the steps of a drove of sheep not long gone by. The opening in the hedge was easily found, and she took the footpath into the fir-wood.

The trees were jewelled with rain-drops sparkling in the glimpses of sunlight which broke through the heavy clouds at intervals; again a gust of wind shook the branches, the heavy drops fell in showers, and there was a patter in the underwood as of children's feet. Light and shadow played about the trunks, and there was a fresh, grateful odour in the wood. At first she walked upon soft moss or long thick grass, because the footpath was so miry; but presently the ground beneath the trees became bare and brown, relieved only now and then by a little patch of moss, or a group of fungi, and in one part by a solitary wild flower, which lifted up its head courageously to brighten this dark place, and caught new beauty in its solitude as a ray of sunlight fell at its feet to comfort it. Teenie stooped as if she would kiss the flower, but she did not pluck it; she left it there to cheer the path of whoever followed her.

Walter was riding along the road, passed the gap in the

hedge, and yet he divined nothing of her neighbourhood. No instinct told him that she was near ; his horse's hoofs tramped out her foot-prints, and he did not know.

Half an hour earlier, and he would have found her parting with Sandy Crab : but the latter was now a mile or more on his way to the hills, and she was in the centre of the wood.



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CHAPTER XLVIII.

BY THE WAYSIDE.

THE footpath became more difficult to discern as she advanced, and at last all trace of it disappeared. She turned back to seek it—failed; thought she had gone a little too much to the right, and so turned to the left—with no better success. She was puzzled—looked all round; but each direction seemed to be so like the other, that it was impossible to decide which way to turn. Long rows of bare trunks, light and shadow, the brown mould underneath—nothing sufficiently distinctive to guide a stranger to the place.

After a little hesitation, she marched straight forward. An hour's walking, and she emerged from the wood upon a narrow road scored with deep wheel-ruts, and having a ditch on either side.

She was tired, and rested there, sitting on a stone, leaning her back against the bole of a tree, and a black shadow shooting aslant her face and body. Hands resting limply in her lap, head thrown back, and eyes half closed. A sunbeam fringed the shadow, but did not dispel it. There was a warm drowsy moisture in the air, and she sank into dreamland again—the region of constant endeavour without accomplishment. She felt, as one frequently does in dreams, like one trying to escape some danger that was all the more terrible because of its vagueness; but her feet were heavy, and, try as she might, there seemed to be no possibility of moving beyond reach of the enemy. She was sensible of deep depression; she wished to get away, and could not.

She hoped that some one would pass, and direct her to the right road for Steenhylve; but no one came. The birds were making merry overhead, and she sat so still that one little fellow dropped down beside a pool almost at her feet, and bathed himself with much fluttering of his plumage.

At length she got up, and resumed her journey, taking what

she thought was the right way, but utterly indifferent as to her course, she felt so weary in body and soul.

The direction she had taken was towards the hills ; but it was late in the afternoon before she became aware of that, and then she was utterly worn out, ready to lie down by the wayside and die. If it were not that Walter must hate her now, that he would spurn her from him, she would crawl back to the home which became dearer and more beautiful to her the farther she strayed away from it, and crave his pity—even that she would be satisfied with now.

But it was for his sake she had left—for his sake she must keep away. She felt stronger in thinking of that. Presently she was bewildered and weakened again by the disagreeable question, what was she to do, without money or friends, until her father returned ?

Still, it was for his sake : she would think of that and nothing else ; and so she would be able to carry out her resolution.

She came to a clear spring, sparkling like silver, in a hollow by the roadside ; and standing over it, leisurely filling a brown pitcher which had a broken mouth, were two children—ragged, dirty, bareheaded—with black hair, almost white with dust, and unkempt for many a day. They were swarthy-looking, thanks to the sun, and quite as much to the dirt which seemed to be engrained in their skin. One was a boy between ten and twelve years, the other a girl about nine.

Their features were sharp and old-fashioned ; their eyes bright and dark. They looked healthy, in spite of the dirt. One moment they were laughing and admiring themselves in the mirror of the spring—the girl was trying to arrange her brush-like hair in ringlets—and the next they were quarrelling about who should carry the pitcher.

"I carried it last time," cried the boy.

"No, you didna, and you're just a big lazy sumph."

"Say that again, and I'll gi'e you a clyte in the side o' the head."

Instead of saying it again, she put out her tongue at him ; and he might have fulfilled his threat, but that they were interrupted by Teenie asking for a drink. The children displayed no surprise at her sudden appearance, but they gazed at her boldly. Then the boy—

"Do you mean out o' the pig?" (pitcher). "You'll have that, but it's a far better drink if you put your head down and lick it up out o' the well."

"Do you no see the leddy would soil her bonnie ribbons?" said the girl.

The boy was reasonable, and at once saw the force of that argument. He lifted up the pitcher. Teenie knelt on a stone, and avoiding the broken part, placed the edge of the vessel to her parched lips, the children examining her curiously all the time. He held the pitcher so poised that she could take what she required without inconvenience.

"Had enough?" he asked, as she drew back her head; and added encouragingly, "There's plenty more."

She thanked him, and felt much relieved. She inquired the way to Steenhylve.

"I'm no sure, but it's a bittock from this. My father could tell you, for he kens every road in the country; but this is Saturday, and he aye gets fou' on Saturday. Mither will do, though; come on and see."

He took the pitcher and marched on ahead, Teenie following and talking to him: the girl coming last, in order to inspect the stranger's dress.

"What is your name?"

"Willie, and my father is Will Broadfoot,"

"Where do you live?"

"Everywhere, frae Yetholin to Johnnie Groat's. We ha'e a house that gangs on wheels."

He said that with much pride.

"On wheels?"

"Aye, yonder it is."

He pointed to a dingy-looking caravan which stood at the corner of a field; a bare-boned, half-starved horse grazing near it on the roadside.

A woman sat on the wooden steps which led up to a miniature door. She was nursing a child, or rather, she was allowing it to lie across her knees, whilst she employed her hands in washing and scraping potatoes, which were in a tin basin at her feet. A dark, haggard face; her hair, untidy as the children's, had once been black, but was now streaked with grey, and was further altered in colour by the dust which had been

allowed to fasten upon it. Round her neck was a string of bright red coral beads; a red shawl crossed her shoulders and breast, passed under the arms, and was tied in a big knot behind; her skirt was of a thick brown stuff, much faded.

Teenie did not like the appearance of the woman, or of the house on wheels. She should have seen the latter at night in the village market stand, when the back was let down to form a stage, lit by four flaring and smoking naphtha lamps, which showed piles of Sheffield cutlery, warranted; Brummagem jewellery, watch-chains, dog-chains, work-boxes, mirrors, brushes, tea-trays, and the endless variety of nienacs with which the country folk were tempted by Will Broadfoot, the most notable of gipsy cheap Jacks. Then the caravan looked brilliant, and the gaping crowd were too much interested in the jokes and drolleries of Will to notice the haggard woman sitting grim and silent in the back-ground, handing out the various articles as they were required. Light and laughter in front, and she a sad shadow behind.

Without lifting her head, or pausing in her occupation, the woman glowered at Teenie as she advanced with the children.

"Father's no here," said the boy, as if he were well pleased with the absence of his parent; then stepping up to his mother, "There's the water, and here's a woman wants to ken the road to Steenhylve."

"Ten miles or more," answered a low harsh voice:

"Teenie's limbs bent under her at that announcement. Ten miles! and she was already aching in every joint, with pains more acute than she had ever felt before. She felt sick, and was speechless.

"Take the bairn, and I'll let her see the road."

Teenie saw a wee pinched face, lifted up with a feeble smile to Willie. The face was that of a boy of four years, the body was so shrivelled that it was no bigger than that of an ordinary child of ten months. Willie raised his burden easily; the child was so light that a baby might have carried him.

"He's got spinal complaint, and there's a kind o' fever on him the-now," explained Mrs. Broadfoot—Agg she was called by those who knew her. Nagg she was playfully called by her husband. She rose to her feet, a potato in one hand and a

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knife in the other. She spoke with what seemed such callousness to the boy's ailment, that the listener shuddered.

Agg went on—

"You go down the road, and take to your left by the beltane of wood; follow the road, keeping the wood on your right, till you come to the auld coach-road. Turn to your left again, gang straight forrit, and you'll come into the town. Look, yonder are the kirk-steeples."

Through the haze in the far distance, over wood, meadow, and moor, Teenie dimly descried the steeples of the town. Trying hard to remember the directions given to her, she said wearily—

"Let me rest here a while."

"Rest," was the answer, and Agg sat on the step again, and proceeded to prepare the potatoes as if she were unconscious of the presence of any one; never looking up, although she was taking furtive glances at the stranger, and would have been ready to identify her anywhere—never uttering a sound.

Teenie sat down on the grass. She took off her hat—a broad brimmed Leghorn, trimmed with roses and a blue ribbon—and tried to realize her position. But she was very weak, and instead of thinking about her own affairs, she was watching Willie nursing his sick brother.

Willie was chattering to his nursling, and—rude as he had been to his sister at the well—was treating him with loving care. He was plucking reeds and wild flowers to amuse him, and trying to coax a smile from him by tickling his nose with blades of grass. Two shrivelled little arms crept out from the dirty shawl which enveloped the child, and wee worn fingers touched his grimy cheeks affectionately.

"Bonnie Boolie!" said the faint voice tenderly—through all the dirt and rags the helpless one saw beauty in those who loved him—"you're awfu' guid to Patsy, and Patsy's gaun to dee. Whar do you think they'll bury him?"

"In the moon, and there'll be bonnie starns for his grave-stane. But we canna do that enow, so you're going to live to be a big man, and help Boolie to fecht the bubbly Jock [turkey-cock] at Jedburgh."

"That would be fine fun," said Patsy, smiling wanly at the idea of him being able to help his big brother and nurse in anything.

"Will it no? and father will dance a fling on the tap o' the house, and take a smoke frae the lum."

The withered frame shook with laughter at this conceit, and the child murmured again—

"Bonnie Boolie!"

"Come awa' down to the burn, and you'll catch a lot o' minnows," said Willie blithely, as if he were speaking to a companion as active as himself.

He carried the child down to the burn, always maintaining the fiction that Patsy was going along without being carried; and then he caught minnows, and pretended that it was all Patsy's doing. The child quite understood the farce, and loved Boolie all the more, clinging to him as he had never clung to mother or father.

Teenie was very weak, and she wept, listening to the children's talk. The tears did her good. Mrs. Broadfoot went on with her work apparently unmoved, but her eyes brightened when she was shyly asked if she could change half-a-crown. She placed two shillings and a sixpence in Teenie's hand without a word; but she tried the coin with her teeth suspiciously.

Teenie went down to the burn where the children were playing, and gave Willie a shilling. He was amazed at this wealth—he had never before possessed so much all at once,

"I can do what I like with it?"

"Yes."

"What would you like Patsy—tarts or sweeties?"

She took the helpless child in her arms, and fondled him tenderly; somehow love had cleansed the poor thing of dirt, and made his rags appear as good as purple and fine linen.

"I'll keep the shilling," said Willie gravely, "as a luckpenny, and to mind me o' you—it maun be a lucky penny when you're that guid,"

She kissed them both, and said good-bye. Willie hoped she "wouldna catch the fever," and wished that she could bide near them.

She walked briskly enough for a quarter of a mile, but her limbs were feeble, her feet faltered, and she knew that it was impossible to tramp as far as the town that night. Happily she reached a little inn, and there obtained a bed.

In the morning her joints ached still more than yesterday, and there was a severe pain at her heart.

The kindly mistress of the inn insisted that she was too weak to resume her journey, to say nothing of the wickedness of doing so on the Sabbath day.

A day and a night of physical torture that would have been unbearable but for the unutterable agony of her mind.

Monday morning she started. She tried to eat the breakfast provided for her, but could not. She offered the landlady a ring, one of Walter's gifts, in payment of her debt; but the good woman refused it, saying that she would trust her, and only asked for her name and address. After some hesitation she complied—it never occurred to her to give a false name—and then she went away.

But the pains of body and mind were very acute. She could not understand herself, the sensations were so strange. She seemed unable to walk. At the corner of the road, beside the wood, she saw a man who was kneeling upon the ground, and bending over a prostrate donkey.

CHAPTER XLIX.

FAILURE.

BEATTIE, man, Beattie ; what are you so thrawn for ? Can you no speak to me ? Do you no mind that it's market day at Abbotskirk, and if you dinna look sharp, we'll no get there afore nightfall ? Fient a ballant will we sell then, and where's our supper to come from ? ”

He spoke as if he were reasoning with a refractory child ; but Beattie never stirred a muscle.

“ What's wrang with you, man ? You never played me a trick like this afore. Poor sowl, I ken you've had hard work and scrimp fare ; but there's a guid time coming now we've got rid of that confounded fortune ; so rouse up, and let's be travelling.”

Habbie took off his cap, and drew his sleeve across his brow to wipe off the perspiration. He looked puzzled and distressed, he glanced round him as if seeking relief from the green fields and trees.

He saw Teenie, who was standing near, uncertain whether to make her presence known or to run away. But her heart yearned for the sound of any familiar voice, and so she remained, wondering at Habbie's strange address to the donkey.

“ Guid be here, Mistress Burnett, where did you drop from ? ”

She hesitated ; then, awkwardly—

“ I am on my way to Aberdeen, to see if there is any news of my father.”

“ Eh !—you're a long way off your road then.”

“ I—was walking—and missed the road.”

“ Walking !—and where's the minister ? ”

“ At home—I suppose.”

Habbie was quick enough to see that there was something out of joint ; but he only scratched his head, and regarded her with a preplexed expression.

She took a seat on a green knoll near him, and began in a weary, abstracted way to pluck handfuls of grass.

"Yon' was awful work the storm made," he said, watching her curiously.

"What did it do?—was anybody lost?"

"When did ye leave hame, that you dinna ken?"

She felt herself caught, but she was indifferent now to every-

thing. "On Friday night," she answered carelessly.

"In the name of the Lord, what's wrang with you, mistress? I ken by your looks, and by what you say, that there's trouble of some kind. What is it?"

"Nothing—only I want to—I want to go on," was the lame answer. Then, as if afraid of herself in asking such a question, and turning her head aside, "When—did you see Mr. Burnett?"

"Saturday morning, working hard to comfort them that were sorrowing through the storm."

His words recalled vividly the pale, anxious face and the loving eyes of Waker, striving earnestly to discharge the duties of his office, however much his own heart might be racked. She had been thinking of him and of Baby constantly; but the presence of one associated, even remotely with the old-home life made the memory keener, and the sense of all she had sacrificed the more bitter. If it had been to do again, she did not think she would have strength for it. How the memories of his kindness crowded upon her—the sweet vision of home—its tender anxieties, sweet though troublesome—the cry of Baby—the quiet evenings, which had sometimes seemed to her wicked nature dull—all filled her heart with yearning regrets. Elbows resting on her knees, hands covering her face, her bosom heaved with suppressed sobs.

"Beattie and me gave up the fortune at last," said Habbie, as if seeking to relieve her by changing the subject of conversation; "and we came away for a daunder through the country. We have been blithe billies, I can tell you, till this morning, when Beattie looked queer, as though he wasna weel. We came on right enough until he lay down here; and he'll no speak to me.—Do you no hear me, Beattie?—Lord be guid till us, he cannot be dead!"

He had been patting and coaxing his old friend as he might have done to a child in a pet; but Beattie lay so quiet and

pulseless that at length the truth flashed upon him, and he drew back like one stunned by a blow.

His cry was so piteous that Teenie lifted her head and looked at him. He was sitting in a sort of stupor, glaring at Beattie, trying to cheat himself with the fancy that he still saw signs of life. Teenie's love of animals enabled her to sympathise with Habbie's distress. She went over to Beattie, touched him, and knew that the faithful donkey had forsaken his friend.

"Beattie's dead!" muttered the poet wistfully, and for a little while he repeated the words to himself, as if trying to comprehend them. "Beattie's dead!—Aye, man, and you've gane awa' that way, without ever a word of warning! But I winna blame ye; you've been a guid friend and a faithful to me, and the roads and the nights will be driech and dowie without you. It's that fortune did it; I've seen it wearing you to skin and bone, and breaking your heart as it was doing mine. Poor Beattie; many a weary gate we've wandered thegither, and some blithe days we've had too; and you were aye guid to me, auld friend; and I wasna ill to you, was I, now? But that's a' bye, I'll never be able to make a song again, and I might just as weel be lying down aside you."

It was the last feather which broke the poet's back. He could whistle at the disappointment regarding the Methven fortune, and thank Heaven that he was released from all anxiety about it; but the loss of his old comrade and helpmate was hard to bear. He patted Beattie's side tenderly, muttering to himself in a dreamy way, "Aye, and Beattie's dead!—poor sowl."

By-and-by he turned to Teenie, with a feeble effort to grin at the absurdity of his own conduct.

"You'll think I'm crack, Mistress Burnett; and maybe I am; a' folk are crack, more or less, on one subject or another. Beattie was father, mother, brother, and sister to me. Twenty year we've been comrades; there's no a road in the twa counties that we have not travelled thegither—no a house that did not ken us; nobody will ken me now. He was getting auld, no doubt, and I did not make allowance for that; but he's a guid creature, and he'll no set that down against me. He was just a poem on four legs, he was that kind and patient. Many a

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time he's gar'd me wish that men were donkeys, for syne we'd have honest folk to deal with."

He got up, looking at Beattie still, as if he could not believe that they were separated for ever.

"We must give him decent burial, any way. Will you wait there till I come back."

Teenie assented, and he hirpled sadly along the road to some cotter-house about a quarter of a mile distant. The brown and green spotted thatch of the cots was shadowed by the trees; a tiny burn ran past the doors, the clear water glistening and making a merry tinkling sound which the children fancied was the patter of fairy feet. He borrowed a spade and returned. Then he dragged Beattie a little way into the wood, and stopped at the foot of a tall fir tree, on the bole of which the sun was glancing brightly.

"This will do; the sun will come to him whiles; and he was that fond of sunshine! You should have seen him when we were resting, the way he would roll on his back and kick up his heels, and laugh just in sheer joy and gratitude for God's bonnie light. But it's a' bye now."

He began to dig. The earth was soft, owing to the recent heavy rains, and the work went on rapidly. Pausing in his task, and resting on the spade, he looked up at Teenie.

"Do you really think, Mistress Burnett, that there's a place all brimstone flames to roast us sinners?"

She was startled by that difficult question, put to her so earnestly.

"I cannot tell; but I have heard that it is our own conscience which forms the fire."

Habbie reflected—thought of the toothache, rheumatism, and the agonies he had occasionally suffered after a "perfectly happy night." Then, drawing breath as if relieved—

"Oh, conscience!—I think we can thole that."

He resumed his work. Beattie was placed in the hole, and the earth shovelled upon him. Habbie dug up some patches of moss and wild flowers, and planted them on the grave. He cut the name "Beattie" on the bole of the fir-tree, and his task was done.

Teenie was sttiing on the trunk of a tree which had been blown down by the storm, the torn roots rising above her, and

twisted into fantastic forms. She followed Habbie's movements with a sort of mechanical interest, all the time her mind was full of confused visions of Walter, her father, Baby, the Laird, the home she had left, and the unknown homeless future toward which she was moving. She wondered why she remained there when she wished to go on—anywhere so that she might lose herself if she could not find her father. She felt so very weak, and those pitiful commonplaces of life—the necessity of food, the want of money—so interfered with the grand sacrifice she desired to make, and turned all her efforts into the most prosaic failures.

She had the most disagreeable of all feelings—that she had been, and was, exceedingly foolish. What noble ends we might achieve if we were not fettered by the unconquerable conditions of nature! She felt cold, and yet hands and face were burning; the cheeks seemed aflame, and yet she was white as snow. The desire to go on with the sacrifice she had begun was strong and fierce; yet when she rose to quit the place, she felt as if she could not stand.

Habbie caught her arm, and supported her.

"You're no fit to go to Aberdeen, mem, your lane. Come back with me to Rowanden."

She struggled against the thought; but she was incapable of resistance, and he was quietly firm. He led her gently down by the cotter-houses, where he left the spade; then on to the nearest station, where they had to wait a long time for the train. She shrank and quivered with shame at the idea of going home in this helpless state, with the knowledge that all her grand schemes had been frustrated, that she had inflicted much suffering upon herself, and perhaps upon others, without any result.

She would have run away from Habbie, but he kept close watch; for although he had left Rowanden before her disappearance had become generally known, he had shrewd suspicions that there was something wrong, and in any case he had no doubt that home was the best place for her in her present state.

She tried several times to explain everything to this simple friend, and seek his help; but the words stuck in her throat and she could not utter them.

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The train came at last, and they were carried to Rowanden. Instinctively Habbie conducted her from the station by the least-frequented path. Weary and footsore she was guided up the hill by the poor poet, whose own heart was heavy enough, and yet he was able to feel for others, and to give kindly service.

The night was darkening as they ascended toward the manse. She hung back often, and he waited patiently. How would Walter receive her? He would turn her from his door as one unworthy to rest beneath his roof. He must scorn and hate her now; and she had failed so utterly in what she meant to do that she deserved his scorn.

She stopped, and wished to go on to the Norlan' Head, and obtain shelter from Ailie, who would forgive her anything. But Habbie said, No; home was the best place, and they were much nearer to the manse than to the Norlan' Head.

Home—home was the word he kept repeating; and unconsciously it influenced her steps. Yet she trembled with fear at thought of meeting the man she loved; she shuddered in anticipation of his wrath.

The tramp of a horse's hoofs behind them! Glancing back, they saw through the dusk a horseman slowly ascending the hill.

She drew quickly to one side into a gap in the hedge, and dragging Habbie by the sleeve after her, she crouched down; and Habbie made a pretence of trying to hide too, just to please her, but he was really wishing to be discovered.

The man rode by without seeing them, and bowed on his breast as if in despair, the horse dragging its legs as if utterly worn out.

It was Walter: she knew him. Two steps forward, and she could have touched him. Her heart swelled and throbbed like a wild bird, newly caged, beating itself against the bars of its prison, frenzied with fright and pain. Just to see him again—just to touch him—to kiss his hand—to whisper one imploring word, that might induce him to try to understand her—and then, she thought, it would be so sweet to lie down and rest, and to allow all this fever of mind and body to pass quietly away from her.

But he rode on; she did not move, and he did not see her.

Then she trembled with sobs which supplied no relieving tears.

Another weary day of seeking without result, until man and horse were ready to drop with fatigue. He would have gone on himself until he had dropped, but he was merciful to the horse. The burden of his thought was still the same—"She will come back; she will come back;" and so, like a moth to the candle, he hovered about their home, hoping to find there the tidings of the wanderer which all his journeys failed to obtain.

He dismounted at the gate of the field behind the manse, took off the saddle and bridle, and turned the horse into the meadow.

Ailie met him as he entered the house. She saw that he had no news, and did not speak. She relieved him of the harness, and, as she was doing so, he asked—

"Has there been any message for me?"

"Never a word."

"My father has not been here?"

"No."

He passed into his room.

Habbie waited for his companion to speak, but he had to break the silence himself. Touching her arm, he said—

"Did you see yon', mistress?"

"I saw—oh, but he looked wae, wae, and I cannot go back!"

"Why no? When he's wae, that's just the time he needs you; and I'se warrant he's been toiling himself to death seeking you. Come, mem, let's go up to the house. You need rest, and there's nae place like hame, ye ken."

She wished to go—she wished to be near him, and yet she shrank back, dreading his scorn. The poet took her hand. She trembled, but did not draw back. Baby's cry seemed to ring in her ears again. Her heart was bursting with home-longings, and, unresisting, she was led up the hill to the gate. There she faltered again; but Habbie opened the gate, and gently drew her in.

Then a kind of fierceness rose within her. She expected to see the door closed in her face; to encounter pitiless disdain from him; and the passionate nature asserted itself; she was ready to be defiant and as scornful as he could be.

But the door stood wide open. So it had remained, by Walter's orders, night and day since her departure. There was a strange silence in the house—the silence which is in a house where some loved one lies dead.

Habbie drew her into the lobby, which was almost dark in the late gloaming. She yielded to him in her angry spirit more readily than she had done in her fear. She felt like one committed to a desperate adventure, and prepared to go on, because turning back is impossible.

He glanced into the minister's room—the door of it was also open—and he whispered to her as he thrust her forward—
“He's there.”

She saw him standing on the hearth, his arms crossed on the mantelpiece, and his head bowed on them. He heard the whisper, and the rustle of her dress, and turned round.

In the dim light each could just distinguish the form of the other. She was prepared to hear his bitter reproaches, and she stood, trembling, yet like one waiting for an enemy's attack. But he opened his arms and said, in such a low tender voice—
“I knew you would come home, Teenie. Thank God!”

One big heart-bursting sob, and she would have fallen, but his arms were round her, and she was lying on his breast—new strength, new life thrilling through her veins in the knowledge of his love. Yet the new strength made her shame the greater; scorn she could have met with scorn, but love humbled her. She could not look at him; she could not speak to him; all was so different from what she had anticipated, that she could only cling to him, hiding her face, and sobbing in the ecstasy of relief and shame. There are certain still moments which are pervaded by a sense of eternity, and love made this one of them to husband and wife. Their union was more perfect at this moment than it had ever been before.

CHAPTER L.

FORGIVEN.

HABBIE retired to the kitchen as soon as he had seen Teenie safely into the room, and heard Walter's welcome to her. He found Ailie knitting in a vicious way, as if to keep herself from thinking, and Lizzie putting things to rights for the night. On his appearance, Ailie's first thought was to ask him if he had seen anything of the runaway. She thought of nothing else, indeed, except to lament her age and inability to trudge through the country in pursuit of Teenie. But here was the very man who was most likely to find her, if anybody could.

"If you'll give me something to eat, and promise that you'll no stir a foot from here till the minister comes, I'll tell you a' that you want to ken," he said, grinning to himself.

Ailie supplied him hastily with scones, cheese, and milk; and whilst he ate and drank he supplied her with all sorts of information except that which she desired most to have. When at last he told her, she would have rushed off to satisfy herself that he had spoken truth; but he held her back, and begged her to leave the minister and the guid-wife to themselves for a little while. Ailie was convinced of his truth, and although she was full of anxiety to see her bairn again, she discreetly sat down, and resumed her knitting-needles. But the "wyving" process went on in a jerky, impatient fashion, and her only relief was to explain to Habbie, so far as she understood them, the details of Teenie's disappearance. Habbie narrated, with some embellishments, how he had met "the mistress," and how she looked so sickly that he had persuaded her to come home. Lizzie, wiping up dishes, listened with mouth wide open, and had to be frequently called to attention to her work by Ailie.

So the two were left uninterrupted.

They remained a long time without a word passing between

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them—he too happy to utter a word, she too full of joy and remorse to speak. He asked her no questions—he treated her as if she had been rescued from some great sickness or peril, and he was too glad to find her safe, to think of scolding her for having wilfully thrown herself into danger.

She did not feel irritated with him now for his quiet ways, or for treating her like a child. She was conscious of the love which kept him silent, and grateful for the trust of which all this was the proof.

"You are weary," he said by-and-by, "come and rest."

His arm supporting her fondly, they went upstairs. Baby was in his crib, a candle burning by his side, asleep with a bonnie smile on his fresh healthy face.

She dropped on her knees beside the crib, and buried her face in the clothes. Then she fondled the child, timidly fearing to wake him, and feeling that she was unworthy to touch him.

"My bairn, my bonnie bairn," she sobbed, "will you forgive me, as he has done? Oh, but I've missed you, and the thought of you has been like the hand of God leading me home."

Walter stooped and raised her head. He passed his hand across her brow, trying to soothe her.

"My poor wife, you have been much tried. But come, you will rest now, and we shall be very happy again when you have got the better of your fatigue."

"Don't, don't, Wattie—you make me feel wild, and ready to run away again. I wish I had never come back—I wish I had never been born."

"Hush!—I have been waiting for you. I knew that you would come back, and I'll try, Teenie, I'll try very hard to make your home a happy one. I shall hide every trouble from you, and show you nothing but the bright side of our life."

"That's just what I don't like. Oh, Wattie, make me part of yourself—tell me your sorrow as well as your joy, and that will content me. But you've tried to hide things from me, and that vexed me; it made me think you could not trust me as—as—you trust Grace."

There was no bitterness or jealousy in that cry, only the piteous appeal of one yearning to be helpful, eager to share his

pain as well as his joy—the cry of a fond heart craving leave to prove its devotion.

A mist seemed to rise slowly from his vision ; he began to understand many things which had been hidden from him till now. He had regarded her too much as a creature of sunshine, and in his anxiety to divert all shadows from her he had inflicted the deepest sorrow.

“I have wronged you, Teenie—forgive me.”

At that she stared, wondering if he were angry with her—it was so strange that he should be asking forgiveness from her who so much needed his. He was in sad earnest, and she wondered the more. There was such a buzzing in her head that she found it difficult to recall the past or to realize the present. She was home again—that was all she knew ; she was beside him and Baby—that was all she cared for.

Timidly, as if still half afraid of a repulse, she reached up her arms and clasped them round his neck ; he, seating himself on a chair, drew her upon his knee, and at that she clung to him as if drowning, and he had come to her rescue. She was ready to cry again for joy.

“You never wronged me, Wattie ; you have been always good, and kind, and true—and, oh, I have been that wicked !”

“My darling—we must not speak of these things now ; I want you to rest.”

But she would not move ; she seemed afraid to unclasp her hands lest this should prove to be only another of the feverish dreams of home which had visited her during that weary aimless journey, and that she would waken and find herself again on the desolate road, friendless.

He saw that she was in a high state of excitement, and endeavoured to soothe her by loving words and caresses, whilst he avoided conversation.

Her eyes were fixed upon his face, eagerly scanning every feature, noting every change of expression ; it seemed to her as if she could never look enough. By and-by she spoke again, in a low sobbing voice :—

“And I blamed you, Wattie—fancy that ! I thought you looked upon me as the cause of all your misfortune, and that drove me wild because I felt it was true.”

He tried to interrupt her with a kiss.

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"Let me speak; let me speak," she cried. "I was ready to do anything to serve you. I thought you would be happy if it was not for me, and so I went away, meaning to hide myself, and never come back. But you see I could not do that. I heard our bairn greeting and I heard you crying to me wherever I went; and so my heart drew me home again, although my wish was to be far away. Are you glad that I am here?"

She put the question with tremulous earnestness, and he drew her closer to his bosom.

"There is nothing more needed for happiness than just to feel you are safe in my arms. We fret and worry over things that are lost, and never take account of the blessings that remain to us, until they too are swept away."

"And you would not like to lose me?" she said, fondling him, and, like a child that has been promised a new toy, she was eager to be told of his love over and over again.

"You know that I would not."

"Yes, I know now," she said, with a long-drawn sigh, for which there was no perceptible reason.

"Then I am going to be very stern with you now" (she looked frightened, and he smiled; this was so unlike the Teenie who used to tease and defy him); "you will find that I have become a great tyrant, and you must obey my slightest nod."

"I'll do anything you bid me," she said very humbly.

"Then I am going down-stairs to get you something to eat and drink, and by the time I return you must be in bed."

"I don't want anything. Don't leave me."

He shook his head, pretending to frown, and she released him.

"Now remember: five minutes, and you are to be in bed." He went quietly down-stairs.

She pinched her arm, to see if she were awake. She could not yet believe that she was at home, in her own room; Baby lying sound asleep in his crib beside her; and Walter unchanged, unless it might be that he was gentler with her than he had been of late. Yet she had been away three days, and he had asked her nothing, he had not scolded her, he had not breathed a word of blame, he had scarcely even alluded to her escapade. It was very bewildering to her.

She did not know the fierce struggle with passion through which the man had passed. She could not divine his brave resolve that he would win her back by love, to share in his attempt to reach that ideal life which he had imagined for them both.

Walter entered the kitchen so quietly that he startled two of its occupants; the third, Lizzie, was fast asleep, sitting on a low chair, her ruddy cheek pressed against the black jamb of the fireplace.

He held up his finger, warning Ailie and Habbie to speak low.

"You cannot see hert o-night, Ailie," he said in a whisper; "but you shall in the morning, and then I want you to speak to her as if she had never been away from home. Ask her no questions, and do not let her talk to you of the past three days. Keep Lizzie down-stairs. Now, get me something to take up to her."

"Is she weel enough, sir, think you?"

"I cannot tell yet; she is greatly excited and fatigued."

"Habbie thought she was kind o' fevered."

"The excitement would do that. Where did you see her, Habbie?"

"She came home with me, sir."

"With you?"

"Aye;" and he rapidly told how he had met Teenie.

Walter grasped the poet's hand, pressing it gratefully. Kindness is a sort of telegraph; it brings the most distant social spheres into close communication one with the other.

"I'm thankful to have been able to do anything for you and the mistress, sir. I hope she'll be quite weel in the morning again," said Habbie—adding with a wry face, as if he had experienced the worst spite of fortune—"I care for little now, Beattie's dead."

Walter sympathized with him, and promised that he should have another Beattie.

"That's no possible, sir; I may get another donkey, but never another Beattie. But I'm obleeged to you, sir, all the same."

It was arranged that Habbie should obtain a gig at the inn, and carry the good news of Teenie's return to the Laird, and to Miss Wishart.

Walter took the tray which Ailie had provided, and went up-stairs again.

Teenie had obeyed him ; she was in bed ; but her eyes were fixed upon the door, eagerly watching for him, and her face brightened at the first sound of his step on the stairs. She ate and drank because he wished her to do so, and because he was sitting beside her, holding the tray, and trying to tempt her by carving tit-bits of a chicken for her. Although the food seemed to sicken her, she took it to please him. At last the tray was removed to the table, and he sat down again beside her. She held his hand in both hers, as if she were afraid that he would leave her, and she kept her eyes upon his face with such fond yearning in them as shines in a lover's face on the eve of a long separation.

She tried to show her happiness and gratitude in smiles, since he objected to her speaking ; but the smiles were not successful, they were too full of sad regret. He had spoken no word of reproach ; he had given no hint of the vexation he must have endured on account of what she had done. How clear her vision was now ! How plainly she saw the many ways in which she might have helped him, and in which she might help him still, please God ! She had sought to redeem her error by one great sacrifice, and she had failed in that most ridiculously.

Now she began to see that it is in the trifles of life that help is needed most ; in its great crises the nature of man or woman is strung up to hardihood, and is ready to stand or fall, as may be ; but in the ordinary frets and cares of daily work, nature craves for sustaining sympathy. She was growing wise betimes : would it be too late ?

The love in his eyes reassured her ; there was time yet to redeem the past, and she meant to be very submissive. She was determined even to take charge of the Sunday-school, and of the winter charities. She was resolved to listen to his sermons and lectures without falling asleep.

He, too, was thinking of the many things left undone ; of the many ways in which he might have given her pleasure ; of the many ways in which he must have given her pain, by his unconscious neglect. He, too, was forming grand resolutions for the future.

At length her eyelids drooped, and she seemed to sleep ; but by-and-by she wakened up, shuddering, and was only soothed by the pressure of his hand.

"You'll not guess what I've been thinking about," she said.

"I wish you would not think, but go to sleep."

"And you used to wish that I would think," she cried, laughing.

"Yes, but not when you are so tired as you are now."

"But I must tell you—it was awful. I thought the *Christina* was a wreck, and that my father was drowned ; was not that terrible ?"

"Yes, but it was only a dream, and you once told me that dreams go by contraries. So we'll see the skipper home safe and merry as ever."

"Aye, but it could not be a dream, for I was not asleep. It just came to me as I was thinking about everything ; and then there came one of the verses of that old ballad I used to sing to him, and he liked so much—the verse that says—

" ' And hey, Annie, and how Annie,
And Annie, wina you bide ?'
And aye the louder he cried Annie,
The braider grew the tide,

Was not that queer ?"

"Not at all ; you have been thinking about your father ; you are fatigued, and so dangers and night-mares come to disturb your mind. Now try to sleep."

"Put your arm round me then, and I'll try."

He placed his arm round her neck ; she rested her cheek upon it, and with a weary sigh she closed her eyes in sleep.

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CHAPTER LI.

AFTER DINNER AT DALMAHOY.

THE Laird was delighted by the news of Teenie's safe return to the manse, and he gave Habbie a crown-piece with 'thorough good will. He had journeyed far and near in pursuit of her; he had telegraphed to everywhere within a circuit of thirty miles; he had fretted himself and exhausted himself in the vain pursuit, and he had returned that evening late, much tired and very hungry. He had often grumbled at the stupidity of detectives in failing to arrest criminals who had got the start of them: now that he had tried the detective business on a small scale, he pitied them.

He had dined; he was dozing in his easy chair in the drawing-room whilst Alice read the *Times* to him, when Habbie arrived.

Of late Dalmahoy had been paying more than usual attention to public affairs; he was going earnestly into the question of the law of hypothec; he was zealously interested in regard to the repairs of farm-steadings, the erection of labourers' cottages, the abolishment of the bothy system, the drainage of land and the reclaiming of moorland; his interest in these matters became most intense, just as he was about to cease to be a proprietor, and when he would have no opportunity of carrying out the grand schemes of amendment which occurred to him.

Miss Burnett was methodically manufacturing point-lace from a new pattern; Alice was reading sleepily, and marking every comma with a yawn, when Drysdale entered with the announcement that Habbie Gowk urgently desired to see the Laird.

"Confound the fellow! what does he want at this time of night?" grumbled Dalmahoy, stretching himself. "Did you finish that speech, Alice?"

"I'm in the middle of the reply," she answered, hiding another yawn with the paper.

"Yes, yes, of course ; capital speech ; very clever ; but the reply, so far as it has gone, promises to demolish it utterly."

"Why, it admits everything the speaker said."

"To be sure, child—we are always ready to admit everything we feel confident of being able to knock down. That's why I say it promises to demolish the argument."

He half rose from his chair, intending to see the visitor down stairs ; but he altered his mind, sat down again, and had Habbie brought into the drawing-room. The poet was not at all shy ; he bowed to the ladies, and addressed himself to the Laird.

As soon as the message was delivered, Dalmahoy jumped up as nimbly as a youth.

"How funny !" exclaimed Miss Burnett, pausing with her needle half through a loop of the lace.

"I'm right glad to hear it," cried the Laird ; "it's the blithest news that has come to me this long while ; and Beattie shall have the biggest feed he ever had."

"Thank you, sir, thank you kindly, but—Beattie's dead."

"Then you shall feed in his place," cried Dalmahoy, in his excitement forgetting the difference between man and beast.

The ladies smiled ; Habbie saw nothing out of place, and gave his thanks quite sincerely. The Laird questioned him, and was still more delighted upon learning the details of the event. When Habbie had retired, he wiped his face with his bandanna, and thanked Heaven that there was one trouble the less to think about, as he resumed his seat.

"I do not see that her return under the escort of Mr. Gowk will at all relieve us of the scandal which her absence has caused," observed Miss Burnett, actuated by a severe sense of propriety.

"Confound the scandal, and the folk who deal in it !" muttered the Laird ; "she's home and well, that's enough for us."

"But people will talk, papa, whether you are satisfied or not."

"Let them talk."

"You were not always so indifferent to what people said."

"There's no harm in growing wiser, Nelly, is there ?"

"Oh no, if it be wiser to champion the cause of one who has disgraced the family."

"The family be — just so; the family be happy; it has never done anything for me."

"Oh, papa!"

"Well, yes, I'm wrong; the family has done a great deal for me, and I have ruined it."

"You?"

"Yes, I have ruined it, and not Teenie; blame me, not her."

"Why should we blame you?" said Miss Burnett, rolling up her lace, and very much bewildered.

"Because I have spent the wealth of the family, and never made any for it."

"How funny!—excuse me, papa, the words came by accident; but why did you not make wealth for the family?"

The Laird drew himself up in his chair, feeling that he was put to the test.

"My dear, money-making is a special talent—I might say it is genius—just as money-spending is a misfortune. There are some men who toil like slaves, wear their hearts out struggling for money, who deny themselves everything, and yet never get their heads above water—they are for ever at the last gasp; do what they will, strive as they will, they can never overcome the necessities of the moment. There are others—those who are endowed with the talent—who dash along, recklessly we might think, but they always land on their feet. They enjoy life, appear in purple and fine linen, and deny themselves nothing; in time they become millionaires or bankrupts; but they are quite happy either way. If millionaires, they go on enjoying themselves; if bankrupts, they begin again with better prospects than ever. I belong to the first class."

"But you could not help that, papa, you never were in trade."

"So much the worse for me—or rather for you. I have a profound admiration for trade, and really believe that I had some qualifications for it. The trader is the modern knight-errant: he helps the needy, he conquers kingdoms and populates deserts; he wages a perpetual crusade on the undeveloped resources of nature, and his adventures are none the less daring because they render practical service to humanity." ("Humph! capital that would have been for the agricultural dinner. Pity

the best things always occur to me *after* my speech," he muttered to himself; and then aloud) "I refer to this, my dears, because I am likely to begin business myself."

"You, papa!" exclaimed Alice, without yawning.

"How funny!" ejaculated Miss Burnett, closing the top of her dainty work-table and locking it; "I can't imagine you beginning business at your age."

"My dear, you have a happy way of supplying us with the most uncomfortable memoranda."

He got up and stood on the white Angola hearthrug, swinging his glasses meditatively.

"Age is honourable," he went on, "but youth is beautiful; and most of us would be pleased to dispense with the honour in order to share in the beauty."

"I did not mean to offend you."

"Not the least offence in the world is imagined, my dear. But this business idea of mine is not a whim, it is a necessity."

"A necessity—how?"

The Laird coughed and changed the subject.

"I wish we could discover some nice present to give Teenie," he said, as if his whole mind were devoted to the discovery.

Miss Burnett became prim immediately. She had not forgotten Walter's reception of her on Sunday, and she could not overlook the outrageous impropriety of Teenie's escapade.

"But I really cannot understand why Christina should be permitted to do with impunity what would be severely punished in others. She was admitted to a family of distinction, she was accepted as one of its members and made welcome. I think it was her *duty* to respect that family, and to suffer anything rather than bring disgrace upon it. I really cannot excuse her, papa, and I cannot understand how you are so lenient to her."

"Oh, Helen, you are too hard upon her!" cried Alice.

"You are such a giddy young thing, Alice, that I forgive you. I am *not* hard upon Christina, but she has been hard upon us. Poor people who have been raised to a position should remember the gratitude they owe to those who have raised them. I pity her, but I think that she ought to be made to feel her action has been most reprehensible."

Alice shrank behind the *Times* at this severe reproof, and ignominiously retired from the defence of her sister-in-law.

"Don't talk of poor people, Helen; or if you do, talk of them with friendly feeling," said the Laird, with a long-drawn sigh; "you don't know how soon we may be reckoned amongst them. I was telling you about that business project of mine. I mean to take a farm—I could manage a farm, I think—and shall try all my new theories of drainage and manuring in a practical manner. I mean to work with my own hands."

"Oh, that will be delightful, papa!" cried Alice; "and I'll learn to milk the cows, and I'll get such a pretty milkmaid's dress; and you shall learn to sing, 'Of a' the joys of earth that the tongue of man can name, is to woo a bonnie lassie when the kye comes hame.' It will be charming, and I'll enjoy it so much."

And so with that pretty picture of a pastoral life, as represented in china ornaments, Alice was eager to begin the business adventure of which the Laird had spoken. He held out his hand, and she, though not accustomed to familiar endearments, jumped up, put her arms round his neck and called him her "dear, young papa."

"Ha, ha, you rogue! you are ever so much more sensible than that wise sister of yours."

Miss Burnett was quite indifferent to this depreciation of her merits, and with an admirably practical view of affairs she observed—

"But why should you take a farm, papa? Why should not this pretty experiment be carried out at home?"

That pulled him up; he felt for a moment spiteful enough to declare why he was compelled to think of this speculation, and to humble Miss Burnett by showing her upon what very thin ice she was standing. But there was Alice in her pretty childish way hanging round his neck, and forming such sweet visions of a toy farmstead, that he could not find it in his heart to dispel the dream.

"They'll learn the truth soon enough," was his thought; "let them be happy in their ways as long as they can. Why should I disturb them? The time is so short when they must know all and suffer."

So he put off the question with a jest, and said good night with even more good humour than usual.

"We cannot try it here, Helen, for several reasons. We might spoil your butter by new-fangled experiments; and in the strict order of things we might find it necessary to send your pet lamb to the flesher."

"Oh, fie, papa!" cried Alice; "you never could do that."

"Necessity has no law; needs must when the—etc. Good night, my dear, and pleasant dreams."

He kissed her, and turned to his eldest daughter, who rose and kissed him—an unusual display of affection, which made him hold her arms a minute, looking into her eyes curiously.

"I hope I haven't vexed you, papa, by anything I have said about Christina. I *will* try to think of her as you do, but I can't help feeling that she has been most foolish."

"We are all so foolish at times, my dear, that we are only wise when we pardon the folly of others. What would you say, now, if I told you that in consequence of my folly we would have to quit Dalmahoy—have to walk out, penniless and homeless, with nothing to depend upon but what we could earn for ourselves? What would you say to that piece of folly?"

"What ridiculous things you do think about, papa!"

"Is that all you would say?"

"How can I tell you in jest what I would say if you spoke in earnest? I would be very unhappy, of course, but I would try to help you all the same, in whatever way you thought best."

"And you, Alice?"

"I don't know, you dear, imaginative papa. I suppose I would say you had been very, very foolish, and that I was angry with you, and that I would work day and night, and that I would love you more and more, because you were unhappy."

"My darlings"—and he embraced them both—"don't speak of the folly of others until you know what folly you have to excuse at home."

Then, with a hasty good night, he went out of the room, took up his candle from the table in the hall, and went down to the library.

The two ladies regarded his abrupt departure with surprise, and then they looked to each other inquiringly.

"What *can* papa mean?" exclaimed Alice anxiously.

"He is only making fun of us," said Helen composedly.

That was satisfactory, and the two retired for the night.

The Laird found his lamp burning low, and he turned it up. Although it was still early autumn, a fire was cheery in the evenings. He poked the fire and settled down in his chair, without book or paper, apparently content to amuse himself with his own reflections, and the phantasms he might discover in the embers.

It was hard—much harder than he had anticipated—to give up the old life of position, and of comparative comfort, and to begin a new life of struggle and speculation at his years, as Helen had said. He had thought that he could meet it calmly, and, depending upon the innumerable schemes for attaining wealth which he had concocted, and which he had never carried out for want of capital, but would now be able to enter upon with other people's capital, since he had nothing of his own to lose, he had fancied that it would be an easy matter to retire from Dalmahoy, and to make a comfortable living for his children by the force of talent and industry. But it was not easy. Sentimental reasons aside—and these sentimental reasons assumed huge proportions as the day of doom approached—he found his confidence in his own powers rapidly decrease as the calamity became more imminent.

What was he to do with those children—he always thought of them as children, notwithstanding their years—who had learned nothing useful, and who were utterly unfitted to earn their own living? He blamed himself. He ought to have taught them something that would have been of practical value to them in such a crisis as the present. But who could have suspected such a crisis? That was no excuse. He ought to have been ready for it, and he was much to blame. *That* would not have mattered, only they had to suffer in consequence of his neglect.

Then there were strange shadows reaching out of the past, which added much to the bitterness of his position. He began to feel that his years were weighing very heavily upon him, and that the farce of youthfulness was played out.

"A man without money, without the vigour of youth, and with a family to feed and dress—what a helpless beggar he is! I begin to appreciate the blessedness of the rest which is to be found in the kirk-yard—ugh! how morbid I grow!"

He stirred the fire again, and found a sort of grim comfort in watching the old forms and faces which appeared to him in the embers. What duties he had neglected—and what a number of pleasures of which he had stupidly failed to take advantage! Night has a strange influence on the nerves.

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CHAPTER LII.

"GOING, GOING—GONE!"

WALTER would have persuaded Teenie to keep her bed during the next day; but something of the old rebellious spirit showed itself already, and she prayed so hard to be permitted to go down-stairs that, although he saw how excited she was still, and that she was quite feverish, he yielded. She kissed him and thanked him so gratefully that he was glad he had yielded, notwithstanding his conviction that it was wrong.

She dressed with a sort of wild gaiety—like a child who has just been pardoned some offence for which severe punishment had been expected. But she watched him with eager eyes, wondering why he asked her nothing about her absence. Down-stairs she met Ailie, who showed no surprise, no unusual delight at seeing her home again—spoke and acted just as if those weary wanderings of Saturday, Sunday and Monday had never occurred.

Teenie felt puzzled and frightened by this silence. Had it been only a painful dream? Or was this a plan to make her feel the more the punishment that was to come? She would rather have had it all out at once, and yet it was pleasant to drop into the old routine of life as if there had been no break, no torture of fear and suspense to Walter, no frenzied effort on her part to save him by sacrificing herself.

But she had been very weak: she had begun a sacrifice which would have been of service to him, and she had utterly failed to carry it out. She winced terribly at that thought; she felt herself to be so weak and worthless—and yet it was so sweet to be near him again, to hear his voice, and feel his loving care for her as she had not felt it for many days, that she was almost glad at her failure.

The gaping mouth and staring eyes of Lizzie, when she brought in the tea-kettle, were sufficient proofs that the adven-

tures of the past few days were real. The girl had been warned by Walter and threatened by Ailie with severe punishment if she forgot that she was not to say a word to her mistress; but neither warning nor threats could extinguish the amazement expressed on her face.

The feverish excitement of Teenie's manner seriously alarmed her husband, although he tried hard to be quietly cheerful. She would scarcely allow him to leave her for a moment, and she would not allow Baby to be taken from her on any account. She washed him, and dressed him herself; she fed him and nursed him, although it was plain that she was sustained only by excitement which would break down suddenly. She wanted to show how strong she was, and that her wickedness had not injured her health, at any rate.

But Walter, as he saw the flushed face, and occasionally felt the dry hot hand, became more and more anxious about her, and more convinced that he ought to have insisted upon her remaining in bed.

The Laird came shortly after breakfast.

Teenie who seemed to have eyes and ears for everything, was the first to be aware of his approach. She trembled; the blood rushed violently to her face, and then forsook it, leaving her cheeks white. She was almost as much afraid to encounter Dalmahoy as she had been to meet her husband.

Walter, observing these signs of agitation, proposed to speak to his father before admitting him; but she grasped his arm and held him back.

"No, Wattie," she said with apparent composure, "I would rather not have you begging mercy for me."

There was no time for discussion. Dalmahoy was already on the threshold of the room. He was not so spruce this morning as usual, his face was not so fresh, his hair seemed to have more white than formerly, and his shirt-front was not so scrupulously smooth as it was his custom to have it. There was, however, a sly twinkle in his eyes when he observed the position of husband and wife.

She had placed Baby in his basket, and he was lying there crowing manfully, and trying to swallow his fat, puffy fingers; and she was still standing in the act of restraining Walter from going out to meet the Laird.

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"So, madam," exclaimed the latter sternly, striding up to her, and clutching his riding-whip as if he had some thoughts of using it, "you have been trying to frighten us; you have neglected your duties as a wife and a mother, and you have been disgracing our family! What have you to say for yourself?"

"Father!" cried Walter, in utter amazement and horror at this address, for it entirely reversed the system by which he had been trying to win Teenie back to peace and content.

She had been trembling with timidity at his entrance, remembering the tenderness he had shown her in their last interview at Dalmahoy; but this grim address completely changed her—she became doubly defiant. Love could lead her anywhere, make her do anything; but sound a harsh note, and strong ropes could not move her.

"It's none of your business what I have to say for myself," she retorted fiercely.

"So that's your humour, is it? We must tame this proud spirit, and——"

There was passion expressed by her features, but there were bitter tears in her eyes, and he paused.

She saw a tender father's smile growing through the sorrow which was stamped on his face; she saw his arms open as if to receive her, and with a little joyful sob she threw herself into them.

"God bless you, my child!" he said, and his voice faltered slightly as he kissed her; "I did not think you would believe me in earnest. I'm right glad to see you, my braw lass, and I don't care a button what you have to say for yourself, since you have had the good sense to come back to us and relieve us, though you have made my old bones ache hunting after you."

"Did you seek me, then?"

"Did we seek you!—my certes! we have been all over the country looking for you, and how you escaped us is a puzzle to me. But I blame that gowk of a man of yours for everything."

She became fierce again, and withdrew from his arms.

"But you must not blame him!" she cried; "he is true and brave, and I shall never be able to love him enough for all his goodness to me."

"Well, well! there's no accounting for tastes," grinned the

Laird, quite wickedly ; "as I've often said, he has capital ideas in his head sometimes, but they are like a midges' dance, so ravell't that you can make nothing of them."

"You must not say that ; and I'll run away from you if you do."

"Well, I won't say it. Wattie understands me, and he'll take no offence. I dare say he is a good-enough sort of a chiel when you come to know him."

"I'm content to leave my character in your hands," said Walter, smiling ; for he was very happy to see how Teenie had won the Laird entirely to her side.

Seeing that, he determined to obey a summons which he had received an hour before, and which was just then repeated urgently—to attend old Mr. Geddies, who wished to see him ; he had only to cross the road, so he would be back soon. As he was going out, Baby began to assert his authority, and to call attention to himself by a vigorous and continued cry. Teenie lifted and soothed him by means of various tender arts and his feeder.

"I detest babies," said the Laird ; "they are such stupid lumps of flesh and fibre, and they howl so. We ought to be all born grown up with a thousand a year."

At the same time Dalmahoy patted the chubby cheeks of Baby, and was vastly amused when the little fellow clutched one of his fingers, and crowed over it as a prize.

"How touzy your hair is to-day !" cried Teenie, laughing ; "and now I'll punish you for giving me such a scare when you came in—there, hold Baby till I come back."

She deposited her charge on his lap ; the Laird dropped his whip, called her back, and sat in much confusion at the absurd position he occupied. Baby began to cry again.

"The wee deevil," growled the Laird ; "can he not be quiet till she comes back ?"

Then, to quiet Baby, he baa'd like a sheep, cackled like a hen, crowed like a cock, and imitated other animals, tickling and hoisting his charge the while ; so that when Teenie returned, she heard the child screaming with delight—saw the Laird tossing him in the air whilst he brayed like a donkey. He looked shamefaced, and a little vexed, when he found that he was observed ; then he laughed heartily.

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"'Pon my soul, Teenie, you're a witch!" he exclaimed, "and you make a fool of me just as you please. Here, take your con-founded bairn—he's a nuisance."

"No, keep him till I dress your hair. He's very happy, and laughing as if he had the best nurse in the world."

Baby screeched with delight as the Laird tickled him, crying, "Chucky, chucky, chuck—y!" and uttered other nonsensical sounds which represent baby-language. She combed and brushed his hair drawing back now and again to study the effect of her arrangements with the eye of an artist. Finally, whilst he still nursed Baby, she drew him to a mirror to look at himself.

"There!" she cried proudly, "isn't that better?"

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed, putting up one hand to arrange a curl at the side of his head, "ten years knocked off the account. I'd kiss you if my hands were released from this bundle."

So he placed the bundle in its basket, and he took her hands, and touched her brow with his lips. He became serious at that moment.

"You have made me young again, my child; but why are you so hot and feverish?"

He now observed how strange she looked; there was a wild restlessness in the eyes and a quivering of the lips, which at first might have been attributed to her agitation and doubt as to the reception she was to have, but could not be explained by these suggestions any longer since they were friends reunited. Her whole frame seemed to be on fire, and yet she was shivering; that startled him.

"I don't know what is the reason—I'm queer," she answered hurriedly, and flying away to the subject which was uppermost in her thoughts—"but what about Dalmahoy?"

He gave his shoulders an uncomfortable twist.

"There's nothing new about it," he said with a grin; "there will be letters of horning issued against me soon, I suppose."

"What's that horning?"

"Only a summons in the name of Her Majesty the Queen (God bless her,) commanding me to pay the siller forthwith or—get out."

"And you say that as quietly as if it was the ruin of somebody else you were talking about!" she said wonderingly.

"Just that; it's surprising how easily we can bear our neighbours' burdens; so I try to think that it is not me, but another fool, who is about to be turned out in his old age to learn how to gain a decent living."

He spoke gaily enough, but there was a rueful shadow in his eyes. Then she, with a voice that was full of pain—

"I wish I had never come back—I wish I had died by the roadside, and I would have been happy, looking down upon you all."

"You would have seen us miserable beggars when you were away from us, Teenie."

"No, no, you would have been safe and comfortable—I went away thinking that Mistress Wishart would give you the money if she only knew me to be out of the road. But I've come back and spoiled it all."

Walter was at the door, and heard her. He understood every thing now—the idea of self-sacrifice which had possessed her, and which he revered none the less that it appeared to him a foolish one, and he understood the bitterness of heart which she experienced in her failure. He knew something of the bitterness of failure, and he loved her more and more, if that could be. He embraced her tenderly.

"My poor wife, you must not agitate yourself in this way," he said affectionately; "you must not take all our sins upon yourself. Come, be cheerful, Teenie, I have splendid news for you."

"Has the cow calved twins?" said the Laird, laughing, and yet with a kind of grin in the laugh, as if he found it difficult to be cheerful under the circumstances.

Walter's touch revived her, and she looked at him for explanation.

"Better than that, sir; old Geddies sent for me to say that he has determined to resign the church and all its emoluments to me."

"That's four or five hundred a year at least," ejaculated Dalmahoy; "I congratulate you, Wattie—and myself, for now I'll be able to borrow from you."

"Will it save Dalmahoy?" was Teenie's question.

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Walter was unable to answer, but the Laird took up the matter.

"You must get Dalmahoy out of your head, Teenie," he said quite blithely; "we'll manage to live without it. Wattie's luck will make you comfortable here, but it can do nothing up the way."

"Unless we could obtain a loan on the strength of this income," suggested Walter.

"Fiddlesticks! we'll try nothing of the kind. We'll keep what we've got, and make the best of it. I'm as blithe as a peacock with a new tail spread out, Wattie; but if I let you sink your good fortune in the whirlpool of mine, may I be—All right, Teenie, I was not going to swear."

Peter Drysdale, on urgent business, was announced by Ailie. The old butler entered eagerly.

"You bade me bring any letters direct after you, sir, and as you were anxious, I came on with this myself."

The Laird read the letter, and quietly refolded it.

"It's all over, Wattie; I have humbled myself and asked this scoundrel for time to pay. He refuses—says he is pressed for money himself, and that the debt is so long owing I ought to be ready to redeem it now. So up go the bills for the sale. Now then, gentlemen, here's a fine property, and a d——d ass of an old man—going, going—gone!"

CHAPTER LIII.

WALTER'S TRIAL.

DALMAHOY spoke with a sort of forced levity, but he displayed much more agitation than his son had ever witnessed in his manner before.

"It will be a lesson for our neighbours, and they will show marvellous wisdom in descanting upon my ruin," he went on with a half-bitter, half-humorous grin; "throughout the nine days' wonder you will hear them crying, 'Serve him right—what a scamp he was in his young days!—what a wastrail!' and so on, and so on. The worst of it—or the best of it, I am not sure which—is that it's all true. Well, sowing wild oats was very nice—for me—and I won't say a word about that; but they produce a confoundedly nasty crop for those who come after me, and that's disagreeable to think about. Good-bye—come over this evening if you can; I would like to have a chat with you, and ask your advice about the arrangement of things for the sale. I must hurry off now to write some letters, and to meet the architect, who is to show me a plan for the improvement of the steadings on the estate. I don't think it will all go; but we'll see. Where's Teenie?"

She had become very quiet; she heard every word that was said; but she was bending over Baby's basket, pretending to be deeply occupied, although healthy and ignorant little Hugh was fast asleep. The crisis had come at last, and her pulses were beating wildly; the pitiless words of Dame Wishart were ringing in her ears, making them burn with pain and shame; and she thought that she alone was accountable for all this misfortune—that but for her there would have been no difficulty in arranging the Laird's affairs—maddened her. There was no news of Skipper Dan yet.

She rose up when Dalmahoy asked for her, and he took her hands kindly.

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"You are very feverish my child; you must take care of yourself for all our sakes—God bless you—good-bye."

"Good-bye," she answered with a curiously trembling voice, and suddenly she put her arms round his neck, kissed him, and ran out of the room.

"That's fine, Teenie; come back and do it again," he cried quite gaily; adding with much satisfaction, "On my soul, Wattie, I feel the better of it."

Every sympathetic word or look supplies an appreciable quantity of nerve-force, and helps a man more than pounds of money. It is so much courage, and therefore so much strength to a man with the least sincerity in his nature. That was the Laird's experience at this moment.

Walter accompanied him to the gate, where his horse was tied. As he was putting his foot in the stirrup—

"There was a time, Wattie, when I might have been grumbling at you for this; but I see now it's my own fault, and my own ill-luck. You were right to marry Teenie; she's a fine creature, and I'm fond of her. Be good to her and she'll make you happy. As for me, I have been selfish, therefore a fool, and I am punished."

"I too have been selfish and thoughtless—which is the worse sin?" muttered Walter.

"I don't know, and it doesn't matter," was the answer as he settled himself in the saddle; "but next time you preach, take that text about being sure your sins will find you out—is it a text or a tract? My sins have found me out at any rate, or rather they have caught me at home, and they are using the lash without mercy. I'll tell you a secret—but don't be too hard upon me, Wattie: we are none of us pretty under the microscope, and poverty is about the most unsparing microscope I ever heard tell of. That fellow, Geordie Methven, was my son, and there he has left a million which nobody is like to get the least good of, and here am I, his father, about to be made beggar for want of a few thousands. It's hard lines, take it how you will. Good-bye—take care of Teenie—she's not well."

He rode away without giving Walter time for reply. The revelation was startling enough, but scarcely so startling as it would have been, had not Walter, at various periods, heard

faint rumours of the paternity of George Methven. The case did seem a hard one, and minister though he was, he pitied rather than blamed his father. At the same time he experienced a sharp pang at the thought that Methven should have been capable of amassing wealth which would have relieved their father of all trouble, whilst he seemed to be scarcely capable of struggling above poverty.

He pulled himself up at that : he had adopted a career which was full of possibilities for serving others ; he was bound in honour to accept all its responsibilities and difficulties with brave steadiness of heart, and he would do so—please God.

A quiet nature, full of devotion to religion, and to the practical expression of it by helping all, so far as in him lay, by blaming none—*that* was Walter. He was capable of pitying the most atrocious criminal ; he was so conscious of weakness in himself that he was sorry for the errors of others, and whilst he condemned the sins, he was merciful to the sinners. Always, he argued, “under the same circumstances, I might have acted like them.” And so he was kind, gentle, and helpful to the backslider, because he pitied and sympathised with him or her.

He attended the funerals of Red Sandy, Buckie Willie, and of other unfortunate fishers who had perished in the recent storm, and whose bodies had been recovered from the sea. The entire male population of Rowanden paid the last mark of respect to their dead comrades ; the women kept indoors, as, according to custom, they were not permitted to proceed to the churchyard.

From the top of the hill the procession looked like a long dark line curving to the bends of the road, and moving with slow solemnity up the hill towards the church. Most of the men were dressed in black suits, all in black coats. The coffins were conveyed in carts the greater part of the way ; but when near the church they were taken upon the shoulders of stalwart fishermen, the carts drawing to one side, to permit the procession to pass. All spoke in undertones, as if they were afraid of disturbing the repose of the dead. The conversation generally related to the deceased friends ; their many good and kindly qualities were affectionately remembered ; all their faults were forgotten. But there were also occasional refer-

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ences to the state of the weather, and the prospects of the next night's fishing,

It was a bleak day; there had been rain, the grass was heavily wet; and the "Razor" was blowing keenly over the land, compelling the mourners to put up their hands to their hats, tossing their hair, and flapping the tails of their coats.

There were a number of gigs and other vehicles following in the wake of the procession—farmers, extensive fish-curers, and others, from Kingshaven, amongst whom was the provost, five proprietors who had to attend a meeting of heritors, and Mr. Forsyth, banker, lawyer, and factor to Sir James Scott, the patron of Rowanden Kirk. Mr. Forsyth had been summoned by the old minister, Mr. Geddies, in regard to the latter's proposed resignation.

The burial over, the fishers returned to the village, and enjoyed a holiday. There was mourning for a little while, and many regrets for those who were lost. But work must be done; the mourning was soon over; women gathered bait and men went out to the fishing just as usual—laughed and made merry when they were in luck, and grumbled when they were out of it. There is a merciful buoyancy in human nature, and ordinary sorrow, as well as ordinary joy, only touches the heart and is gone.

Walter had several unpleasant experiences to endure this day, and he had need of all his patience. He had to listen to some severe reflections upon himself—he could bear that: but he had also to listen to disagreeable reflections upon his wife, offered to him in the form of condolence, and that he could not bear. To the surprise of everybody, he defended Teenie with a vehemence which he had not previously displayed out of the pulpit. He would not permit one word to be said in her dispraise; they might say what they pleased about himself, and he was mute; but touch her name, and he was up in arms, fierce as a raging lion.

Mr. Pettigrew, with his partiality for unpleasant truths (and possibly with some recollection of the way in which the young minister had snubbed him on various occasions), was the first to hint that, as an elder, he could not possibly give his sanction to the appointment of Mr. Burnett as the successor of the much respected Mr. Geddies, until certain scandals connected with

his household were investigated by the presbytery, and satisfactorily explained to them.

Walter writhed under this vulgar publicity of his household troubles, and his first impulse was to refuse the appointment altogether; but that would be to cast a doubt upon his faith in Teenie, and so he said quietly that he would not permit Mr. Pettigrew, or any one else, to interfere with his private affairs. It was torture to him to speak in this way, for he felt how weak it was without explanations, which he could not give even to friends, and which he would not give in the presence of such a man as Pettigrew. Then again came the thought to turn away at once from the thankless task he had undertaken; and that suggestion was met by the resolve to hold his place, even for her sake, and to defend her honour by showing his own faith in her. But it is easier to spoil a good impression than to erase a bad one, and he had much to endure for days afterwards. People looked at him askance, whispered about his affairs, pitied him; and a few members of his congregation (those who had declared he was not "sound" after his defence of the poor woman who had been charged with selling sweeties on the Sabbath) openly expressed their disapproval of Mrs. Burnett's conduct, and of the minister's in defending her.

It was hard to bear, but he did not flinch or falter. His chief anxiety was to keep the scandal from Teenie's ears; and in this desire he was successful, but the source of his success was a sad one.

On reaching home after the harassing work of the day, Ailie told him that Teenie had gone to Craighburn.

"To Craighburn—what for?" he exclaimed.

"I canna say, but she got Drysdale to take her in the gig."

"Did my father know?"

"He was away before she started."

Walter had no difficulty in guessing the object of her journey; and, worn out by the events and discussions of the forenoon, he felt irritated with her for going to see his aunt without consulting him. Frowning, he put on his hat again, took his staff, and went out to meet her.

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CHAPTER LIV.

THE DAME'S WHIM.

THAT time when she became so quiet, Teenie had devised a scheme by which she might yet help Dalmahoy and Walter. The hope was very faint—the execution of the scheme demanded the sacrifice of every remnant of pride which still lingered in her breast. But her nervous excitement had attained such a pitch, that she seemed to have strength for the most desperate adventure.

Drysdale, who had much liking for her, readily agreed to stay behind the Laird, and to drive her to Craighburn. Arrived at the door, she found it open. Pate was lying on the mat, and saluted her with a kindly wag of his tail. There was no one about, but there were sounds of laughing voices in the kitchen regions. Teenie marched straight in and up the stairs to the door of Dame Wishart's room. She paused an instant. What was she going to say or do? Impulse had carried her thus far; on the road, eagerness to be at the place, and fear of her own resolution failing, rendered her incapable of forming any plan of action. The dame had inspired her with a certain awe, and, if she allowed herself to think about it, she dreaded the possibility of being frightened away without accomplishing her purpose.

With feverish haste she turned the handle of the door, and so committed herself beyond the possibility of retiring.

On the instant she seemed to become unnaturally cold and calm; now that there was no retreat, fear was banished. Her eyes and brain became clear; she saw everything, understood everything, and yet she felt as if her soul were standing aside, watching her body going through the scenes that followed.

Grace was sitting near the window, sewing; Dame Wishart sat in her big chair, leaning back on the soft cushions, apparently sleeping. Grace turned at the opening of the door, gave a little start of surprise at seeing Teenie, and, finger on lips, as

if to beg silence, advanced quickly. She embraced her affectionately.

"Come down stairs," she whispered, "where we can speak without disturbing my mother."

"I came to beg of you," said Teenie in a low voice.

"What?"

"To let me speak to your mother, alone. It is for Walter's sake, and the Laird's."

Grace looked at her, and divined her intention; but she did not like the excited brightness of her eyes.

"Go in," she said; "I'll help you if I can."

She passed out, closing the door gently after her.

Teenie stepped forward, and stood beside the big chair. The dame's head was thrown back—the eyes still remained closed. The large features, wrinkled and sallow, were like those of a strong man whom the hand of Death has touched. A hard unyielding face, and yet now in its repose there were lines of suffering scored upon it which commanded sympathy, if not affection.

Strange caprice—the face reminded her of her father's; all that the dame had done on account of Grace, he would have done on her account. Impulsively she stooped and kissed the withered lips.

"Aye, aye, Grace—you thought I was sleeping, my doo, but you're mistaken; I've been watching you," muttered the dame.

She slowly opened her eyes upon the stranger; she glanced at the seat her daughter had just vacated, then at Teenie.

"Who are you?"

Teenie was calm and resolute as the dame herself now.

"I used to be called Teenie Thorston; Burnett is my name now."

Dame Wishart stared at her for a minute in silence; then, impatiently—

"What do you want?"

"Your help—money."

"What for?"

"Dalmahoy."

Surprised as she was by this singular attack, and puzzled as he was by the unaccountable absence of Grace, the dame, having somewhat of the Laird's sense of humour, was amused by

the sharpness and directness of the replies. But she still regarded the visitor with a frowning brow, and the thin lips tightly drawn. There was a kind of sarcastic indifference in her tone.

"Aye, lass, you've a glib tongue in your head—who put you up to it?"

"To what?"

"To come here—who sent you?"

"No one."

"My certes, then you're not blate to come to me without leave asked. You are no friend of mine."

"I know that," she said simply, and her heart seemed to swell with a sob which she had difficulty in suppressing; the effort threatened to upset all her resolution.

Harsh and stern to her as Dame Wishart was, Tœnie's heart was yearning so for a kind word, a kind look, that she could have loved the old lady tenderly if she would have given her leave.

"Then what right have you to come to me with such demands?"

The dame reached out her hand to touch the bell which stood on a little table by her side.

"I have no right," she said, and her voice was very pathetic in its submission; "only I wanted to speak to you, because there is nobody to save us but you. You have satisfied the Laird and Walter that there is no help to be got from you—they would be angry if they knew what I was doing, but I do it because you have not satisfied me."

"Why not, since the others know me well enough to take my word?"

"Because I won't believe that your heart is dead."

The Dame started, withdrew her hand from the bell, and allowed the arm to rest on the table.

"The heart may be quick enough, and yet seem cold when it is doing justice. What else?"

"Because you have a daughter who is good, brave, and noble—who has sacrificed her life to you—I cannot believe that you are ready to make her ashamed of your memory."

The dame looked at her sharply, lips trembling a little. Then—

"You are a bold hussy—what do you mean?"

"I mean that in refusing to save your brother from ruin you bring misery on us all, and Grace will share it—she will feel it worse than any of us, for she will feel that you, her mother, have doomed her to a life of shame and regret."

"What shame or regret can there be to her?"

"The shame of thinking that you, because you could not force a man to marry her, revenged yourself upon those who were blameless in order to reach him."

The cold stern eyes were fixed on her face; hard and pitiless sounded the voice.

"Did you come here to preach—to me?"

"No; to beg."

But with these words all Teenie's courage evaporated; the woman seemed so immovable, cold and hard as a rock; she seemed to have vexed her rather than persuaded her—seemed to have rendered her more resolute than ever not to give the needed assistance. Teenie made another effort to control herself, to remain calm and firm; but her body swayed to and fro, she seemed to stagger and then she dropped down at the dame's feet.

"Ah, madam, I cannot speak right—I am like a child. I spoke just now thinking to frighten you, and trying to hide from you the pain that I am suffering. But what I said is true, although I cannot hide my pain. I wanted to persuade you to act for their sakes as if I had no share in their joy or sorrow; and now I can only cry to you—think of them, and forget me."

Teenie's piteous appeal did not appear to have more effect than her bold argument. The dame remained silent, looking at her, and yet the eyes seemed to be seeking something beyond the kneeling figure. There had been things said which had already suggested themselves to her mind, and stirred disagreeable sensations. She could be unforgiving to everybody except Grace. On her account she was ready to do much that was opposed to her own humour.

Imprisoned for many years in this room by physical ailment—although comforted by the happy hallucination that the disablement was only temporary, and that she would soon be up and doing with all the brisk activity of early days, and resolutely shutting her eyes to the lapse of time until she became

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really insensible to it—the dame's sympathies had become narrow as her life. She saw nothing to care for, felt there was nothing worth caring for, beyond Grace, her constant companion and nurse.

Yet she had quick eyes and keen appreciation for all that affected her daughter. She knew of her love for Walter, and the whole of the solitary life became concentrated upon that one scheme of the marriage, and the union of Craighburn and Dalmahoy. Never a shade of doubt as to the realization of the plan occurred to her, until the revelation came that it was not to be. Then the revulsion to disappointment made her hard and relentless. Having had only one thought directing and sustaining her narrow life, she was too old to learn submission, to condone faults and to forgive, when the fact became known to her.

But she was shrewd and practical in most things; her agent and grieve found that, when they came to discuss business with her. There was not a grain of romance in her nature; therefore Walter's marriage to Teenie would have appeared to her a piece of unpardonable folly, even had there been no question about Grace; but when Grace was involved, his conduct became in her eyes criminal, and meriting the severest punishment. She knew nothing of sentiment, but she was full of devotion to her daughter. For her sake she would do what neither pity nor a desire for her own comfort could tempt her to do.

So, the natural shrewdness and the love for Grace moved her now. She spoke abruptly—

"Get up and take a chair, wise-like."

Teenie obeyed silently, her heart quite still, under the impression that she had failed as utterly in this mission as she had done in her attempt to run away.

"That's better," continued the dame, adding sharply, and as if it were a subject of personal offence, "but you're not looking well—what's wrong? For heaven's sake, don't faint—I hate people who faint. There's no use in it, except with a man, maybe. There's a smelling bottle yonder on the table; take it—get better, and listen to me."

Teenie was obedient, but she did not get better, and she was very weary. Dame Wishart was pleased by this ready compliance with her direction.

"That's better ; you're not such a gowk as I thought you were. Now let us see if we can have a sensible chat. At first I was going to ring the bell and get you taken away ; but you don't seem to have much nonsense about you, and so I'll speak to you."

"Thank you," said Teenie quite indifferently, for she was now hopeless.

If she had been scheming to propitiate the eccentric old lady, she could not have done better. The dame was always suspicious of any who made a fraise with her.

"Good ; now hearken to me. I don't like you—do you know what for ?"

"Yes—Walter Burnett married me."

"Just that. Well, my brother Dalmahoy and Walter came to me, both begging for help, and I refused them. Then you come, as if there were any chance of your succeeding when they failed. What made you think of it ?"

"God knows ; I came without thinking, or I would have known that the journey was useless. You never can guess the despair I felt before I could come to you. The thought stirred me that you might not be so very hard, and I came. I'm sorry. I'll go now."

She got up to leave.

"Sit down," commanded the dame, and she obeyed mechanically. "I said we were to have a chat, and mean it."

The dame was sitting up, erect in her chair, her features fixed in an emotionless gaze which seemed to exert the power of mesmerism over Teenie. The latter made an effort, and spoke—

"What have you to say ?—you refuse my prayer. Very well ; we are done, and I can go."

"No, I have not refused, and I want you to tell me what I am to do."

"Me !"

"Yes, you."

"In what way ?" she cried with new hope ; and then doubtfully : "Ah, madam ! don't make me suffer more than you can help : it cannot do you any good, and it may be death to me."

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us. I'll tell you everything. Suppose your father had lived for—there's no saying how many years—in the notion that Wattie was to marry you. Suppose he toils, and plans, and thinks, and arranges, all his life, so that it may serve you and Wattie when you are married. Suppose there has been nothing in the world for him but this marriage—that his very life hangs on it, and that some fine day Wattie comes to him and says. 'I've married somebody else, but I want you to help me'—what would the skipper say? Would he say, 'I'm sorry for you; there would have been no need to ask me for help if you had kept your bargain with me; but I'll help you all the same as if you had not upset the whole plan of my life?'—would he say that?"

Teenie felt her heart beat quickly, then stop, and begin again more violently than ever. There was a brief struggle with herself, for she saw clearly what the dame meant, and she would have liked to answer falsely; but she could not.

"No, he would have been angry—he would have refused his help," she cried, with a sensation as if her heart and brain were bursting with the wild throbs which agitated them. But she had spoken truth, and although it involved her own despair, she experienced a faint sense of relief.

"Very well," said the dame coldly, "you have told me what I ought to do."

There was a curious silence in the room—silence, and yet the breathing of the two women was distinctly audible.

Teenie bowed her head as if in resignation, and rose to leave the room.

"You see it's not my fault—you cannot blame me," cried the dame.

"No, it is not your fault—there is nobody to blame, but me."

With what a weary hopeless voice she said that, and how heavy seemed to be the weight of that blame which she took so bravely on her own shoulders!

She was at the door—paused, turned back to Dame Wishart, who sat watching her curiously. The girl was better than she thought! But when Teenie returned, she hastily seized the smelling-salts as if to be prepared for a scene: hysterics—or a faint, which was equally abhorrent to her.

But Teenie was very quiet.

"I want to shake hands with you, Mistress Wishart, and to say good-by. We are not likely to meet in this world again, and I wish to part friends. Try not to think very hard about me : I had doubts, but I could not know that I was to be the cause of all this trouble."

"And what will you think about me ?—that I'm a cruel old witch that has neither heart nor gumption, and that ought to be burnt ? Is not that it ?"

"No, I will try only to remember that you are the mother of Grace."

The dame searched her face suspiciously, as if to detect any trace of deception or cajolery. But she discovered none, and so, briskly she said—

"You have told me what I ought to do : now I'll tell you what I'm going to do—I'll find the siller for Dalmahoy, so you need not be downcast on that score."

"What !"

"I'll find the siller for Dalmahoy. Grace wants it, and so I agree, now that I've had a chat with you. You're not half so bad as I thought you. Don't say a word, but go and tell them, and if one of them comes to thank me I'll refuse to do it. It's Grace who wants it done—it's Grace's doing. I would have seen you all far enough before I would have done it. But she's a fool, and I'm half-minded to set you down as another. Come and see me again this day six months. Go."

Teenie stood dazed and dumb ; she was like the condemned one who obtains pardon at the foot of the scaffold : she could neither understand nor realize the position at first ; and during the whole of the dame's eccentric address—delivered with great volubility—she scarcely moved.

The revulsion of feeling from despair to joy was too sudden, and the first thing she did was to give a big hysterical sob, to seize Dame Wishart's hand and cover it with warm kisses of gratitude.

This the dame resented fiercely.

"I hate hysterics, and the whole cleckan of women's ways," she cried, and rang her bell violently.

Grace appeared.

"Take this gowk away, or she'll smother me," was the dame's command.

"God bless you!" gasped Teenie.

"You have consented at last!" exclaimed Grace, her pale beautiful face illumed as if by sun-light. She had never doubted that her mother would consent.

"Away with her, or I'll take back my word."

"Come, Teenie," whispered Grace, and led her out of the room.

"Ods my life!" muttered Dame Wishart, settling herself on the cushions; "they make an awful steer about it; but I feel the better for't. Maybe I'll get a nap now."

Teenie made a great effort to control her emotion, and only touching the hand of her benefactress with her lips, went out of the room quietly with Grace. But as soon as they were in the parlour—only Pate looking on, wagging his tail and grinning with his ugly mouth as if in entire sympathy with the whole proceedings—she clasped Grace in her arms.

"It is all your doing—you have saved us—God bless you—you were made to be the comforter of those who suffer. You bade me hope—it would have saved me many a pang if I could only have believed in you. I never can thank you enough, Grace, for this, but I shall try to love you more and more."

This gratitude was painful to Grace. She had pleaded with her mother, and implored her to do what she had now done: but she had never been able to obtain the concession, although she was sure that it would be given in time to serve her uncle.

"I am very, very happy, Teenie, that you are relieved," she said tenderly, "but you must not give me more credit than is my due. I did try to get my mother to yield, and she refused; then you came—she saw how you were suffering—she felt how brave you were, and saw how bonnie you are, and she yielded to you, not to me. She is not hard, Teenie, although she is very stubborn sometimes."

"I shall never doubt that, Grace. Now I must run and tell Wattie—it will make him blithe. You have saved us again, Grace—your life must be a glad one."

"It will be so if I see you happy."

They parted: there was no shade of doubt between them now: sorrow had knit them so closely together. Teenie would have been ready to lay down her life for Grace—admiration and gratitude so filled up the measure of devotion.

CHAPTER LV.

"THE BRAIDER GREW THE TIDE."

SO it was all settled ; there was to be no sale at Dalmahoy, and the Laird would be able to carry out at leisure his multifarious schemes for improving and reclaiming land, and for the discovery of minerals. The latter was his great dream. As yet he had realized only a few specimens of very doubtful ironstone ; but he was positive that there were rich seams of coal and iron in the earth, if he had only time and means to pursue the search vigorously. It was beyond question that there were valuable quarries of granite, and with these alone he saw an immense fortune in the not distant future, if he could get money to work the quarries, and to introduce his new system of polishing the granite.

His mind became more deeply immersed than ever in these speculations, as soon as he learned that his sister had consented to advance the money requisite to relieve Dalmahoy.

"She's a sensible woman after all," was his comment, without apparent surprise or extraordinary elation.

He thanked Teenie as warmly as if he owed his release to her ; and she was unspeakably happy. After all, her weary flight from home had not been without its use in the service she had desired to render ; for it was this flight, as Grace told her, which first shook the resolution of Dame Wishart. Teenie knew how Grace must have been imploring her mother to yield, and she could easily guess what use she must have made of the story of her running away, in order to bring the dame round to the point of altering her decision not to help the Laird.

They were going to be very happy now ; everything seemed to be shaping into a path of quiet and contented life. Mr. Geddies had resigned ; Walter would have the full stipend. He had not told her of the objections raised to his appointment, because he could not without explaining matters which for her sake he desired to keep out of sight. She only knew

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that all was well with them, and promised to be better. Then her father would come home in good time, and he would repay Dame Wishart, and then she would feel so proud as well as happy.

She walked with Walter in the garden, and pointed out to him the various alterations she intended to have made next year. The rose bushes were to be transplanted to a place close to the house; the "rasps" were to be moved more towards the wall, and the strawberries were to form a large centre-piece, surrounded by geraniums. She intended to have such a lot of things done for next summer, that there would be no garden in the country at all to be compared to theirs.

He could not tell her of the possibility that they might not be the tenants of the house next year; he did not dream of the change there was to be before the winter had passed.

He saw that she was still very much excited—feverish, even—and did not wonder at it; she had endured and suffered so much within the past few days. He entered into all her little projects with good-will; he shared her hopes, believed in her plans, and was ready to help in their realization with all his heart. But he could not avoid feeling uncomfortable when he looked into her face, and saw that its brightness was almost unnatural.

"What a pity!" she cried, standing beneath a large apple-tree; "the leaves are becoming brown already; and, see, some are beginning to fall."

"What then?—as they fall they suggest to us the glories of another spring and summer."

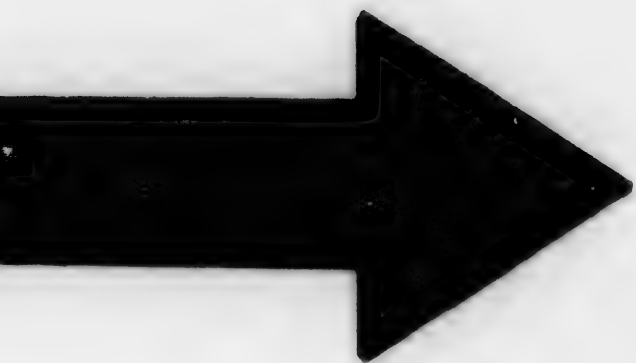
"I dare say," she answered thoughtfully; "I never cared about these things in old times, but somehow the brown leaf makes me sad now, and the prospect of spring does not relieve me—there's a gloomy winter between whiles, you know."

"But then we have bright fires and merry stories to make the winter nights short; we have work and hope to make the time pass too quickly rather than slowly; and we will rise up in the spring with new knowledge gained to make the summer all the more delightful. I like the winter nights and the snow."

"Because you do not doubt the coming of the spring."

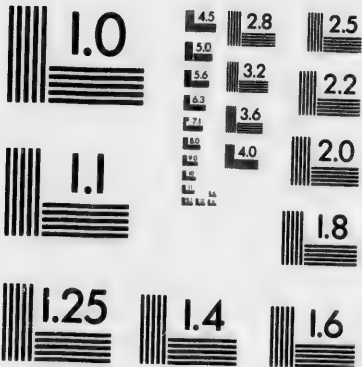
"And you?"





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"I cannot say, and I do not want to think. I am just that happy I could greet. But I will not. Come, and I'll show you how I would like the beds of pansies laid out; Grace is fond of pansies, and I want to give her a surprise."

"You are always thinking about Grace."

"I cannot help it; and maybe the reason is partly because I find you are always thinking about her."

"I don't know," he said, searching his own mind; "she seems to be so much part of ourselves, that it is impossible to have a joyful thought and not associate her with it."

"And to me it seems impossible to have a sad thought and not associate her with it."

"That's hard upon her," he said smiling; "and yet perhaps it only proves her goodness, for you find comfort in thinking of her when you are sad."

"Yes."

They walked round and through the garden, Teenie full of her new arrangements and improvements.

He observed that at times she leaned heavily on his arm, and again seemed to barely touch him, as if she were making a mighty effort to show how strong she was. He did not like that, and he liked still less the occasional chills which passed over her.

At length he insisted upon her going in doors, and she submitted. She attempted to nurse Baby, and was too weak—she could hardly lift him. So she went to bed laughing at her own weakness.

"I have been too much put about, Wattie," she said, with a hysterical laugh, "but I'll be all right in the morning. Never you fash about me."

But she was not all right in the morning—she was in a burning fever, unconscious of everything and everybody about her.

It was many days before she became conscious again. The poor child's nature had been overstrained; the journey, weary and futile, then the visit to Dame Wishart, had worn the life out of her, and although joyous excitement had sustained her for a few hours, the moment it was withdrawn she fell down, utterly worn out and helpless. Besides, the fever which, in her weak condition, she had taken from the child of the gipsies Broadfoot, had begun to assert itself.

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She lay for days unconscious of everything around her—the passionate devotion of Walter, the faithful nursing of Grace, and the ever-present care of old Ailie. All that love could do was done for her, and many times the eager eyes of the watchers were gladdened with hopeful signs.

But the hope died out as they listened to her piteous cries for help—she was in a great sea, and the waves were threatening to overwhelm her; but her father's hand could save her, and he would not reach it forth. Then there were visions of the old life at the Norlan' Head, of the pigeons, and the occasional flights in the boat. Next there were storms and shipwreck, and her father was drowning, and she could save him if she would only reach out her hand; but something held her back, and she saw him sinking before her eyes—sinking when she might have saved him, and she could not lift an arm. That drove her frantic, and she struggled fiercely to get out of bed, whilst the hearts of those who watched became sick and almost hopeless.

At length there came a calm. She remained very quiet, and gave no trouble. She opened her eyes, and asked for Hugh. The bairn was brought to her, and she played with his hands—she was very feeble, and it was with difficulty that she could move her arms. But she seemed to be pleased at the sight of Baby, now a big strong fellow, with a will of his own. He made a grand dive at her hair, but as it had been cut short, he caught nothing but the strings of a cap, with which he was quite content, and began to amuse himself.

She laughed, and hugged him—it was such a pleasure to find that there was anything about her which could afford delight to others. They wanted to take Baby away, after he had torn the cap off her head, and had made several attempts to gouge out her eyes. She resisted, but she was very weak, and so they carried Hugh off, screeching with regret that he had lost a new toy.

Then Teenie in her awakening senses began to wonder at the strange silence in the place, and at the dim light.;

"Why do you not open the windows?" she gasped, "let me see the garden. I want to get all these rose-bushes moved, and that honeysuckle is too thick about the door. We must have it spread more over the face of the house. There's such a heap

of things I want to have done this year. What a vexation to be lying here quite useless?"

"I'll see that it is all done as you wish, Teenie," whispered Walter, his voice trembling and husky; "don't disturb yourself about it."

"Very well."

The sound of his voice soothed her in the wildest paroxysms, and she remained for a long while silent and motionless, after he had given her that assurance of the fulfilment of her wishes.

By-and-by she reached out her hand as if seeking something, and Walter's hand grasped hers; that seemed to relieve her, and she knew at once who was beside her.

"I'm thinking about those rasps, Wattie; if we could get them planted up along the dyke side, they would look better than beside the strawberries."

"Yes, just as you would like to have them."

Another pause. Then she, quickly—

"There's no word of my father yet?"

"None."

"When you get word of him coming, you must deck me up in all my braws, and we'll go down to the port and meet him. He'll be that glad to see us—but not a bit more glad than I'll be to see him. Dear old father! he's just gone off on this whaling expedition to get siller for me—as if I needed siller when you were beside me, Wattie! But I thought it would do him good, and so I said nothing.—Have I been long lying here?"

"Yes, several weeks."

"Lucky he didn't come home whilst I was ill—he would have been upset about it.—What a pity Mistress Wishart could not have made up her mind at once to help us.—Is your father quite well?"

"Quite well, Teenie, only anxious about you."

"About me?—Have I been so ill then?"

"You have been very ill—so ill that we are all frightened about you."

She was silent for a little while; and then, anxiously—

"But I'm better now?"

"Oh, yes," he cried eagerly, "you are much better now, and we will soon be out together, running about like bairns or but-

terflies, and gathering honey, that is pleasure, from all our old haunts."

She was silent for a long while again; and then, with a restless movement, she muttered—

"Queer how that ballad keeps running in my head, and always the same verse."

"What is that?"

"Do you not mind? I sang it not long ago:—

"And hey, Annie, and how, Annie,
And Annie, winna you bide?'
And aye the louder he cried 'Annie,'
The braider grew the tide."

"It's a sad song, Teenie, and I don't like it."

"But aye the saddest songs are sweetest. Oh, Wattie, I was that wae when I thought there was to be sorrow and parting between us on account of that nasty siller; and now I'm that glad to think of the bonnie days we are to spend together—in the woods, on the moors, and on the sea: my heart is just bursting with joy, and I cannot hide quiet."

"But you must be quiet—the doctor says so, or we shall never have a chance of the bright days you are dreaming about—my dear wife, I am longing for them too."

The terrible threat which he held out acted like a charm upon her, and she became unnaturally still. By-and-by the restless spirit broke out again, and although her eyes were closed, the lips murmured snatches of her favourite song—

"And hey, Annie"—a long pause. Then—"Annie, winna you bide?" Another pause: and after, she broke out in a low tone as if she was dreaming—"But aye the louder he cried 'Annie,' the braider grew the tide."

Walter felt his heart sink within him. There was something so weird and prophetic in the words—she had lingered over them so strangely, even when she had been well, that in spite of himself—in spite of all his stern efforts to suppress superstition of every kind, he trembled, and was afraid.

What was the mysterious cloud which was creeping up to him and enveloping him? All his strength was powerless against it; all his love failed to help him. There was the dark mystery, ever present to him, and rendered more terrible by her gay

words of hope. He saw the terror drawing near; she saw nothing. The future was all bright and full of gladness to her; she was busy with the arrangement of the pleasures of the coming season: she was full of joy in thinking of the new buds and flowers which would spring up under her care.

He knew that the buds would spring, the flowers would bloom, but she would not see them. He tried to shut his eyes to that pitiless future: it was there all the same. Turn from it as he would, fate was too much for him, and he was compelled to submit. The flowers she planted she would never see in bloom.

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CHAPTER LVI.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

THOSE who would have blamed Teenie were silent : those who would have condemned her were full of pity ; those who would have remained neutral in the threatened war between the minister and his congregation, became warm sympathizers and upholders. Sorrow had reached out its hand, stirring the germs of mercy in all hearts—almost controlling the thoughts of the people, and directing them into channels of kindness. Even Mr. Pettigrew, as he tied up his parcels of tea and sugar, spoke with bated breath and solemn head-shakes of the state of affairs at the Manse.

Those who loved her, men and women, moved with white faces and in silence to and fro, in the darkness of their fears. She was blithe, and saw no danger. The sunshine which entered the room seemed to fill her with brightness and joy. She was busy with such grand schemes of improvement in the house and in the garden, when she should be able to go about again.

It was this joy and bright hope which tried her friends—the shadow of the future lay so black before them. Walter, Grace, Dalmahoy, and Ailie found it difficult not to cry when she expected them to laugh.

Then came the news that the *Christina* had touched at one of the northern ports. A telegram from Skipper Dan—all well, and the expedition one of the most successful that had been known for many years. In a day or so he would be home, if he had anything like fair wind.

There was nothing more needed to complete her happiness except Dan's arrival. She sang for joy, but her voice was very feeble. She did not observe that, and she lay with a bonnie smile on her face, listening to the wind, and calculating when it was contrary, when it was favourable, and how fast it was driving the *Christina* home.

About this time Dalmahoy went to Edinburgh. He was absent only four days, and immediately after his return he had an interview with his son.

"Do you smell parchment, and the Court of Session?" he said smiling; "I cannot get them out of my nostrils. I have been all this time sitting at the feet of the wise men of the law, and I come back not a whit better than when I departed."

"I suppose your journey was on account of the Methven property?" said Walter carelessly, for he had no interest in money at that time.

"Yes, and it seems to me confoundedly hard that such a fortune should be lying there useless when there are so many honest folk in sore need of it. On my soul, Wattie, it almost tempts me to become a communist, and to cry out for a new division of the world's wealth. But I am not quite a lunatic yet, and so I am saved from that absurdity."

"Do you mean that you were trying to get part of the money?"

Walter spoke with an unpleasant quiver of the lip. He did not like the idea at all.

"Why not?—I was his father—that was no advantage to me, it seems. But on one occasion he wrote to me that if ever I found myself in extremity he would be ready to share his wealth with me, but not otherwise. He was a queer fellow, but not a bad loon either, and helped me once or twice. He had a spite at me because I did not marry his mother, and he had a most ridiculous tenacity of memory for old scores."

"I quite sympathize with him. I would have had much the same feeling as his appears to have been, under the same circumstances."

"Possibly, and I would not have blamed you—I am not blaming him exactly—but you would not have been such a fool as to die without leaving a will. It was a bit of mean spite and showed the lowness of his origin. Look what quarrels he has caused, see how he has set the whole country by the ears, and separated me from some of my oldest friends. Why, if he had spent his life in planning vengeance, he could not have hit upon a more successful scheme than that of dying intestate."

The Laird looked and spoke as if he had been cruelly and unreasonably wronged.

"I do not like the subject, father ; suppose we talk of something else."

"As you please, but you might have the grace to listen to me—I would not have moved in the matter on my own account, but there are others."

"I beg your pardon," said Walter, awkwardly and remorsefully.

"Say no more, but listen. I was aware that none of his father's relations, not even the father himself, had any claim upon the estate. But I had a vague idea—thanks to the necessities that have pressed so hard upon me of late—that those letters of his might, in the absence of a will, constitute a kind of claim ; and so, after much hesitation, I determined to submit the whole affair to the lawyers. The result is—nothing. I cannot make any claim on the score of relationship, and the letters are worthless."

"Then who is to get the money—is that known ?"

"Nobody. Habbie Gowk was the nearest to it ; but he fails like the rest for want of some trifling link in the proof of his identity. The number of claimants is endless ; but none of them can prove kinship on the mother's side with sufficient clearness to be accepted as the heirs. So the lawsuits will go on for years ; people will wear their lives and hearts out striving to grasp the fortune, and they will die lamenting their folly. I shall not be one of them, I shall be wise in time and give it up, like Habbie. When one is hungry, a crust in the teeth is more satisfactory than the vague prospect of a fine banquet. The writer Currie still expects to get something for his clients ; but the fortune goes to the Crown, and the Crown will keep it—so there's an end of an auld sang."

"Are you much disappointed ?"

"I am, for it seemed to me that if nothing could be got out of the scramble for myself, something might have been secured for Teenie. It would have made everything so comfortable if she had only proved to be the heiress ; and at one time I really thought she would have got the greater part of the fortune, but it was a mistake."

He had not the least conception of how much misery that mistake had brought to her.

"Did you ever tell her that you expected her to be the heiress ?" said Walter thoughtfully.

"Yes." And the Laird felt that there was something like a blush rising on his face as he remembered the circumstances under which he had told her. He wondered if Walter remembered.

The latter turned away from the subject, and they never spoke of it again. But he saw more and more clearly the cause of Teenie's unhappiness; and he blamed himself much for his blindness—he might have saved her so many sad thoughts. In so many ways he was conscious of failure in his duty towards her, that he could never forgive himself. She had been standing alone, with nobody but him to help or guide her; and he had devoted himself to his work, shutting his eyes to her needs and neglecting them.

He prayed that opportunity might be given him to amend the past; but he could only stand by and wait. Always she had the same loving smile for him, and the same eager question—"What news of the *Christina*?"

At last he was able to give the news she longed for: the *Christina* was entering the harbour of Kingshaven. That brought new colour to her white cheeks—new life to her body. She lay listening and waiting for the skipper's step on the stairs.

There was the usual bustle at the harbour: sturdy women packing barrels of herring, and rolling them to one side, where they formed long rows, duly branded after being examined by the inspector of fisheries. The coopers were busy with hammer and adze, making barrels, or closing up those which were already filled. Vessels of various sizes—brigs, sloops, and smacks—were in process of lading and unlading, or lying up, undergoing repairs. In the midst of all this activity, the *Christina* was slowly making her way to safe anchorage.

Dan, browner and shaggier than ever, was giving his orders in his usual steady, firm way. His giant form towering over his men, he was more like one of the old Norse kings than ever. Busy as he was, he looked often to the quay, seeking some one who was not there.

He had watched every small boat which put out from the shore, from the moment they crossed the bar; but she did not come to greet him. It was a long time before he felt convinced that she was not even on the quay; and then he growled at Ellick Limpitlaw, as if he had been to blame.

Old acquaintances crowded down to welcome him ; but Teenie did not come ; no one spoke of her, and he began to feel that she had forgotten him. He made his way to Rowanden, and there he noted that the pleasure which friends expressed at seeing him was mingled with a sort of pity.

"Is there anything wrong up-by-e ?" he said to Take-it-easy Davie.

"She's no weel," said Davie, understanding at once to whom he alluded.

Then Dan strode up the hill, full of fierce thoughts of dire vengeance if his lass had not been well treated.

He met Walter.

"Have you kept your word ?" he demanded—"have you been guid till her ?"

"I have tried. Come, she is waiting for you."

The sorrow that was in his face and in his voice satisfied the father ; and the shaggy giant, who had been so fierce a moment ago, was led like a little child into her room.

She gave a cry of wild joy, and clasped him in her arms, kissing him many times ; and he submitted bashfully. She was so shadowed by his broad person that he could scarcely see her ; but he knew that she was sadly altered. She looked bounnier than ever, but her beauty frightened him.

CHAPTER LVII.

OVER THE THRESHOLD.

SHE was so merry that he almost forgot his fears. She laughed and cried almost at the same moment, in the joy of seeing him safe home again ; and she begged him to stay near her—to sell the *Christina* and never venture to sea any more. Then she was so proud when he told her of the thousands which he had gained by this single voyage, and that another such voyage would make him a rich man. She was proud because now she felt that Dame Wishart could be paid, and by her father ! He did not understand to what she referred ; but he told her that all he had was hers, and she was just to do what she liked with it.

She was quite happy now, and the future seemed so bright that she found it difficult to be still ; she would have been up at once, but when she tried to rise she found that all strength had deserted her : she could scarcely even sit up in bed.

She had Baby brought to him, and she laughed at the awkward way he attempted to nurse his grandchild ; she told him how she had been wearying and waiting for him ; and how, since he had come, she would never allow him to go away again ; she told him how good Walter had been, how faithful Ailie had been, and how the Laird was the best and kindest friend in the world.

So she prattled on, and Dan's heart became the heavier as her mirth became the brighter. She told him all that she was going to do, and all that he was to do : the future was very beautiful to her now, and they were all to be so very happy.

But he understood. He had brought riches to her, and they were useless. The glad day, which had been his guiding star through many perils, was never to be his ; all that he had striven for was snatched from him at the moment when his hand seemed to be about to close upon it.

Others saw that his face was dark—that he was gruff and indifferent to them. They also saw that he devoted himself to Baby with a passionate tenderness, which was all the more

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pathetic because he tried so hard to hide it from observers. He would sit beside Ailie for hours whilst she was nursing the child, never speaking, but watching the little one, and trying to anticipate his wants in a rough, awkward, and shamefaced way. Ailie caught him more than once—when she had left Baby asleep in his crib and returned suddenly—touching the fat puffy cheeks with tender fingers, and looking at him with longing eyes, as if this were a treasure bequeathed to him by Teenie. He always looked so uncomfortable when thus caught, that Ailie pretended not to see.

Like the others he waited day after day, and the silence in the house became so customary that no one appeared to observe it. Yet all were listening for the change which they knew would come soon.

Dan took to Grace almost as much as to Baby, and she was the only one to whom he would speak of his sorrow. She was a second daughter to him: to all others he was gruff and unsympathetic, apparently indifferent to the cloud which enveloped the house. Baby and Grace lightened the darkness to him.

Teenie was playing with Baby one day, and Walter was standing beside her. She looked at her husband with a smile.

"Do you know, Wattie, I feel as if I were going to learn soon what lies beyond the sea and the hills. What a queer notion that is, and how the desire has haunted me ever since I was a wee bairn!"

"Perhaps it is ambition, Teenie, which should be kept down," he said, shaking his head with mock reproof.

"No, I don't think it is that—it is just a notion. Do you mind once you told me that if we went over the sea and over the land, we would just come round to the place we started from?"

"Yes."

"Was it true?"

"I think so."

"Then if I go away I'll come back to you in time?"

He busied himself arranging some flowers which stood in a vase on the table by the bedside: he could not speak just then.

"Dear Wattie," she murmured after a pause, "we'll learn some day all that is strange to us now.—I do love you."

He stooped and kissed her.

"Let me kiss you again," she said. "There, now take Baby away—I'm weary; let me sleep."

She closed her eyes, smiling, as he lifted the child, and she went to sleep. He stole out of the room. Grace and Dan were at the door.

"She is sleeping—do not disturb her," he said softly, and they all crept down-stairs.

It was the long sleep. So quietly she passed away, that they did not know their loss until some hours after she had gone. Till the last moment she had been so cheerful. So full of confidence in the bright future, that even those whose love made them most fearful were cheated in hope, and the end came as a shock to them. Death is gentle to its victims ; it is the survivors who suffer.

The tongue of slander had been hushed before ; it was silenced now. Walter turned to his work, very pale and weary, but resolved to go on with it to the end. He had no thought of running away now ; he was resolved to remain there, that her name might be the more respected, and that he might teach the lesson which his suffering had brought to him. He might have sought forgetfulness in change of scene and change of work ; but he preferred to go on with the task which had been given him to do, amongst the people who knew his sorrow and who sympathised with it.

It seemed a commonplace way of doing ; but he accepted life in its commonplace forms. Romantic despair would have rushed from the scene of disaster, and come back refreshed, with wounds healed by change. He took up his work and went on with it just like one of the fishers or trades-people who have to work, no matter how much they mourn. There may have been unconscious egotism in this, for he knew that his sorrow gave him power over the people : his sufferings gave him authority which he had not possessed before. They listened to his words with new-born respect, and profited by them so much the more.

Her memory was dear to him, and therefore he wished to remain near her ; he knew that in doing so he was discharging a high duty to the living as well as to the dead ; and the vanity which strives to do what is best for others is surely wisdom ; in his case it was more—it was self-sacrifice, for he felt that in losing her his life had been marred, and his first temptation had been to abandon the Church altogether. Was he tried more than others ? He thought of the morning after the storm, and he said, "No ; I am like those people ; I suffer like them

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—let me to do my work like them, bravely and submissively, under what conditions the Lord wills to impose.”

So he did not falter in his work ; and the people wondered whether this were a man who was callous, or who was brave beyond ordinary men. They listened to the pathos of his voice, to the touching simplicity of his words, and they believed in him—they were grateful to him ; he taught them to understand so many things which had been strange before ; patience and faith became comprehensible in the light of his sorrow.

Skipper Dan was silent and grim. What he suffered no outsider could guess ; but he suffered all the more that he concealed his grief. He made a will—provided for Ailie, and settled everything else on his grandson. Then he got the *Christina* ready for sea again, and set sail after a last longing look at the simple grave in the church-yard of Drumliemount.

“If I happen to die on land,” he said to Walter, as coolly as if he had been arranging about the disposal of a block of wood, “I would like to be laid there—beside her. Will you see it done ?”

“Yes !”

“I’m obliged to you.”

He pressed the hand of his son-in-law, and went away. Success attended him wherever he went. The sea was kind to him, and all its dangers turned away from him. It became a by-word to be “as safe as if you were on board with Skipper Dan.” He found joy in life, little as he had expected it when he saw the earth close upon Teenie’s coffin ; and when his time came, he knew that his grandson was a wealthy man.

The Laird was one of the quietest and one of the keenest mourners for Teenie. She had become very dear to him. But he said nothing about it ; if you had heard him uttering the driest platitudes in the ears of Walter, trying to console him with such saws as—“We must all endure these calamities”—“We are all mortal,” etc., you would have thought that he was indifferent, if not callous. But in the quiet moments you would have seen how sad his face was, how anxiously he watched his son, and how eager he was to do anything that might comfort him. Then at times, when the wind was blowing high, and the big voice of the waves spoke loudly, he would saunter through the kirk-yard, and linger near her grave, sweet memories making shadows on his face—for there is always an element of sadness in memory.

CHAPTER LVIII.

SUNRISE.

THE collapse of all the claims advanced to the Methven fortune produced as much excitement as the first announcement that it was waiting for an heir. The best society of Rowanden and Kingshaven was up in arms of indignation against the iniquitous law which by a mere quibble, of course, [and read by the officers of the Crown—withheld the property from the rightful heirs. But the matter was not to be allowed to rest—it was too important, the stake was too high, and purely on public and philanthropic grounds there were to be appeals, and every engine of the law was to be set a-going to get the money for somebody.

These engines of the law, however, being expensive to work, and the issues more than likely to go against the appellants, although everybody threatened loudly for a few days, nobody proceeded to action.

One peculiarity of the case was that people who had been at daggers drawn whilst in expectation of getting the money, became quite devoted friends as soon as they knew they were not to get it, and were charmingly unanimous in their condemnation of the jugglery by which they had been cheated of their rights. They were not at all clear as to who had cheated them, or as to the person upon whom the blame should be cast; so they took refuge in vague charges against the Crown generally, and against the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer of Exchequer in particular. They had no doubt that this latter official would pocket a large slice out of the fortune himself, and consequently it was not his interest to do justice to the deserving, although distant, relatives of the late George Methven.

Another peculiarity of the case was the beautiful frankness with which each of the lately expectant heirs declared that he or she would have been delighted if the friend to whom he was

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speaking had obtained the fortune, and that the speaker had never expected, never even dreamt of, any personal aggrandisement by means of "that poor fellow's fortune," but had been all along interested, simply on public grounds, in the success of somebody else.

"What a lucky thing for us," observed Aunt Jane to General Forbes, over their after-dinner whist with double dummy, "that *we* never allowed ourselves to think of that wretched fortune which has upset everybody. We would have been so miserable now."

"Certainly, we were lucky not to think of it, since we had no chance of getting it."

"Don't you think—*hearts are trumps*, dear. Oh, you know; very well—don't you think that it is very surprising that Dalmahoy, with all his experience, should have ever imagined that he could possibly obtain any part of the estate?"

"He's a fool—that's bad for you, I take your queen—but I believe that he was misled by some fancy about that Thorston girl. A fine creature she was, and she ought to have got the money—*trump to your ace*."

"What, have you no diamonds?"

"Not one;" and then, in a duet—

"What a lucky thing *we* did not speculate upon that fortune!"

It was in this manner that the heart-burning and bitterness of the worthy folk found vent. Everybody was full of self-congratulation over the indifference they professed to have felt regarding the million that was heirless, and of profoundest pity for everybody else who had wasted time, thought, and money in attempting to gain possession of the brilliant Will-o'-the-Wisp.

Even Mrs. Dubbieside, who had been one of the most eager to create a claim, was grateful for the humility of spirit which prevented *her* from thinking about the fortune (privately she told the provost that he was a mean-spirited creature to allow the matter to drop, without, at least, causing the dismissal of the Remembrancer of the Exchequer). But she was utterly unable to understand how the bailie's wife could have been such a fool as to upset her household by her greedy and absurd expectations—not to mention the extravagances into which she had launched on the strength of those expectations.

The provost, dounce man, kept a quiet tongue in his head, and allowed his wife to abuse him in private, and to play the contented woman in public, as much as she pleased. Experience had taught him that opposition was the ammunition of domestic comfort.

On the other hand, the bailie's wife was equally surprised at the pretensions of Mrs. Dubbieside, and wondered if the provost would presume to keep up his carriage and lamps, "now that there was no chance of his getting any share of the Methven fortune."

"But what will be done with the money?" inquired Mrs. Shaw of her husband, who, being a banker, was supposed to be well informed upon such matters.

"It will remain in the hands of the Crown, I suppose, until somebody appears with a claim strong enough to win it," he answered; and in the meanwhile, Currie, and such lawyers as he is, will grow fat upon the fools whom they can tempt to try to get it. There's no denying, though, it's a hard case, and a great pity that somebody does not get it. It would save ever so much trouble and vexation of spirit during the next fifty years."

"Siller is a dreadful thing," commented the banker's wife philosophically; "it's a mercy we have nothing to do with it."

That was the almost universal exclamation; and the wonder is, considering how thankful all the people were to be saved from the root of evil, that they had been so eager to grasp it, and so spiteful against anybody who seemed to have the slightest chance of beating them in the struggle to possess it.

The widow Smyllie was very much disheartened, and honestly owned that she was so. There had seemed to be a prospect of providing for her children, and it had been snatched away from her. Reason and law were nothing to her. She could not understand why the Crown should absorb such a fortune when there were so many poor people, like herself, who stood in so much greater need of it.

"Do you really think there is no chance for us?" she said to Dalmahoy, distressfully.

"Not the slightest—how should there be?"

"And will *nobody* get it?" She felt as if it would have been

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a satisfaction to think that somebody had got it—somebody whom she could have abused and vented her spite upon.

"There's not the least likelihood of any of the present claimants getting it, at any rate."

"I don't believe you ever tried, or you might have got something for us."

"Now you are ridiculous, my dear. What could I do?—I could not make you the man's sister!"

She would not have thanked him if he could have done so; all the same, she was angry with him because he had not, and refused to speak to him for six months afterwards.

This conclusion to the prolonged suspense about the Methven fortune was eminently unsatisfactory to everybody. If it had been allotted to any one of the claimants, there would have been the comfort of being able to abuse the lucky person; but when only opposed by an indefinite devourer called the Crown—who could neither feel sarcasm nor suffer under scandal—it was impossible to relieve the heart of its pent-up indignation otherwise than by pretending to have no indignation to vent.

Habbie Gowk grinned at the general disappointment, and wrote some satirical verses on the subject, which were published in the *Kingshaven Chronicle*, and caused great irritation amongst the many who applied the rhymester's whip to their own shoulders. He would have been perfectly happy in witnessing the chagrin which his verses provoked, if only Beattie had been there to share his pleasure. The Laird gave him another donkey, and it was christened Beattie; but the poet was never so frolicsome as he had been in the old days. He rarely wandered far from Dalmahoy or Craighburn, and by-and-by he took up his quarters permanently at Drumliemount.

Throughout the time of sorrow at the manse, Grace was the guiding spirit; everybody turned to her for help and guidance. Quietly she took command of the house, and saw that all the necessary arrangements were made decently and in order. When the sad duties of the occasion had been performed, she went home.

No one had appeared to be conscious of the gentle influence which had kept everything straight, but the moment she left, her presence was sorely missed. Walter was for some days

restless and uncomfortable; the skipper roamed about the house in an unsatisfied way; and even Ailie felt that the compass of the house had gone wrong, or was lost.

The feeling, however, wore away in time from all hearts except Walter's. He missed her from the house; he missed her controlling hand in all his surroundings. He said nothing; he went on with his work resolutely, determined to teach in his life, as in his preaching, that the often apparently unmerited misfortunes of this life are reconcilable by faith with the common idea of the Christian creed, that God watches over the fall of a sparrow even, and is tender and helpful to all who love Him. He wished to show to his people that there are the possibilities of happiness in every life, if we only knew how to reach and use them.

And he did not fail in this; the people loved his calm pale face, which was full of a divine sympathy, and they appreciated his earnest desire to help them in the common struggle of daily life—to keep the heart pure and the feet clean; but they felt it most whenever sorrow lighted on their hearths.

To Grace he was always an affectionate brother; but as time went on, and he noted the clinging devotion of his motherless child to her, he was startled by an idea which he dared not utter, and which filled him with painful questionings.

She was always the same to him—in all things his loving sister and adviser. She did feel momentary chagrin when there came whispers to her ears mating the young widower with this or that eligible damsel in the parish; but she presently laughed at the rumours, and she watched over Baby with a tenderness for which Teenie must have been grateful; and the child took to her as if she had been his mother. She was able to do this frankly, because she was so entirely unconscious that Walter ever could be more to her than a brother.

"Aye, aye," muttered the dame often, as she watched Grace moving about the room; "and that poor lass has gone, and I'm here yet. Well, I'm getting on in years, there's no doubt of that, and there's no saying when my time may come. But I'm real glad I did not refuse her that time she came asking for help. I would have been sore fashed now, if I had thought she could have carried a black score against me up yonder. And

she was not a bad creature, either ; I would have liked her much if she had come to me again—Grace !”

“ Yes, mother.”

“ Tell your uncle Hugh I want to speak to him.”

Dalmahoy came ; but his interview, which was private, ended in his again offending his sister. He left the room saying—

“ I’ll do nothing of the kind. Leave it to themselves ; if it comes about, all right ; but I won’t interfere.”

Then there came a time when Dame Wishart was very ill. Dalmahoy and Walter were very often with her. Grace could not be spared from her side for a single hour ; and so Ailie was obliged to bring little Hugh over to Craighburn to see his adopted mother. The dame frequently desired Grace to bring the bairn into her room, that she might see what he was like, and how he was thriving.

On one occasion when she had sent Grace for Baby, she turned to Walter with all her old sharpness and penetration.

“ Wattie, my man, I am coming near my time,” she said quietly, “ I mean the time when you’ll have no more fash with me. When that time comes, Grace will be alone in the world.”

There was command, and yet appeal, in her voice and look. Walter was startled, for she suggested what he would have most desired, yet feared to breathe. But when Grace at that moment entered the room with Baby, he put his arm round her waist, and led her to the bedside, looking at the dame as if expecting her to speak.

“ Bairns,” she said in her brusque way, “ do you think you could do something to pleasure me before I go ?”

“ Oh, mother,” cried Grace, “ is there anything we would not do to pleasure you ?”

“ Then get married ; the lass Teenie would wish it as much as I do.”

“ Grace shrank back, but Walter held her firmly, and Baby interfered with her movements.

“ Thank you, aunt,” he said, looking at Grace tenderly ; “ you have said for me what I never could have said for myself, although I wished to say it.”

“ Marry her, then, marry her, and I’ll die happy,” said the dame hastily, and as if she were anxious to get the matter settled off-hand.

"Grace, I have thought of asking you to be my wife, but dared not. It is your mother who helps me to my only chance of happiness in this life—will you marry me?"

She was dazed and confused for a minute; then she placed her hand in his frankly, giving with it her whole heart and soul.

"Yes, Wattie," she said simply.

The two, with clasped hands—she holding Baby as if he were part of the compact—bowed their heads before the dame, who gave them a fervent blessing.

"That's right, that's right; you're sensible at last.—Now read a chapter for me. Read a bit of Solomon's Song, and stop when I lift my hand."

Walter took the Bible, and read the passage she desired, Grace sitting beside him the while, with Baby on her knee. Dame Wishart lifted her hand when he came to the words—"For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come."

THE END.

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